

---

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google<sup>TM</sup> books

<http://books.google.com>





6254



CONVERTED

75-

872114









**INSTRUCTIONS**  
**ON THE**  
**DOCTRINES, DUTIES, AND RESOURCES,**  
**OF THE**  
**CATHOLIC RELIGION,**

**TRANSLATED**

*From La Doctrine Chrétienne par LOMOND.*

---

**BY THE REV. JAMES APPLETON.**

---

**SECOND AMERICAN, FROM THE EIGHTH ENGLISH EDITION.**

---

**PHILADELPHIA:**  
**MICHAEL KELLY,**  
**NO. 10, STRAWBERRY STREET.**

**1841.**

69930543

We approve of the republication of the "Instructions on the Doctrines, Duties, and Resources, of the Catholic Religion, translated from the French of Lhomond, by Rev. James Appleton." Given under our hand, at Philadelphia, this 3d day of May, 1841..

† FRANCIS PATRICK KENRICK,  
Bp. Arath and Coadj. of Bp. of Philadelphia.

LOAN STACK

X99  
449A

GRIGGS & CO., PRINTERS.



BX1750  
L612  
1841  
MAIN

THE

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

SUCH is the importance of Religion, whether we consider its influence in regard to this present life, or contemplate its consequences in respect to a future state, that it can neither be too well known to the community at large, nor too much expounded by those whom the dispensations of Providence have appointed to teach it. Wherefore, with a design to extend the knowledge of a subject of such moment, and in particular to convey to youth an information so essential to them, I have presumed in the following lectures to offer an illustration of this heavenly science.

We are usually initiated in the elements of Religion at a time, when unable to fathom their depth. When we grow up, we look with contempt upon the instructions, given at catechism, as suited only to children: and when matured with years, either the avocations of business, or the allurements of dissipation incapacitate, or indispose us, for any serious attention to what concerns us so nearly. Thus, as we make our entrance into the world, unprepared for its perils, and with but a superficial acquaintance of what alone can be our safeguard, so we too quickly become the dupes of its fatal illusions, and too generally continue slaves to ignorance and vice.

To obviate so great an evil, or at least, to give a check to its overbearing prevalence, no exertion should be spared. For what, alas, is man, without the assistance of Religion! To say nothing of futurity, the consideration of what I am willing for a while to suspend, let us see what he is, when divested of Religion, in regard to society, and his sublunary state. Of what import is it, then, even as to the concerns of this world, to be acquainted with its documents and to live up to its dictates! It uniformly inculcates obedience to superiors, charity for our brethren and justice towards all,—virtues, that are the supporters of order, and the bonds of society. To neglect it, then, is the bane of whatever can be dear to us, or estimable in this life: to follow and adhere to it, the source of all the happiness to be expected here below. Let us give to this reflection, its full and just weight. And should this publication accidentally be seen by any, who dissent from the tenets herein

delivered, let me recommend, at least to their notice, the foregoing observation. For, independently of differences, and the partialities of controversy, the above-mentioned is the purport of Religion in general, and the encomium on merits merely human. But, if we lift our eyes upwards, and view the rewards and punishments, this same religion holds out for that eternity, which it opens to us, we shall want no other proof to be convinced of its immense importance. A system that ensures an everlasting recompense, speaks too plainly for itself, to need an advocate.

Wherefore, to engrave it more deeply on the tablet of the mind, it is proper to present it under every form likely to elucidate and explain it. Catechisms and sermons are the usual means employed to accomplish this purpose. But experience evinces that they are, both of them defective in attaining the wished-for object. The catechetical information is conveyed at a time, when the feeble understanding cannot soar to such heights. Sermons are partial, and confined to particulars. Something more seemed, therefore, requisite: some plan of instruction, which, while comprehensive as to the matter, might be concise in point of method; and while accommodated to youth, might bear the perusal of maturer years. Should the contents of the following pages be found to answer this end, I shall rest satisfied with the reflection of having contributed my mite to the solid happiness of society.

The original French work is a precious remnant of the piety of that justly respected clergy. For the substance, then, of the matter, detailed in this volume, I am indebted to the labours of a learned and zealous foreigner. But having proposed, at the outset, to adapt this publication to the benefit of my countrymen, I have so much deviated from him, both as to form and expression; I have made so free, on the one side, in omitting what I thought irrelvant, and in adding on the other, what I judged more conducive to this view, that it cannot be deemed a translation; and I have styled it, what it is entitled to, *a work taken from the French*. Let it be termed what it may, however, if it has but the effect of propagating the knowledge and the practice of Religion, I shall be fully content: trusting that a candid public will be indulgent to an undertaking, which the sole desire of serving them induced me to engage in.

# CONTENTS.

---

## PART I.

### THE DOCTRINES OF RELIGION.

	Page
Introduction.—The knowledge of religion	13
The existence of God	16
The attributes of God	19
The omnipresence of God	21
The providence of God	23
The necessity of Religion	27
The unity of God	29
The mysteries of the sacred Trinity	32
The creation	35
The fall of man, and original sin	39
The promises of a Saviour	42
The explication of the promises, and the future conversation of the Gentiles	45
The marks of the Messiah, as described by the Prophets	48
Jesus Christ the Messiah, the Saviour of the world	51
The mystery of the incarnation	55
Continuation of the same subject	58
The public life of Christ: his miracles	60
The doctrine of Christ	63
The virtues of Christ	66
The mystery of the redemption	69
The burial of Christ, and his descent into hell	72

The resurrection of Christ	75
Reflections on the resurrection	78
The ascension of Christ ; and his sitting at the right hand of God, the Father	81
Jesus Christ will come to judge the living and the dead	84
The Holy Ghost is the third person of the blessed Trinity	87
The formation of the Church of Christ	90
The constancy of the martyrs in defence of the faith of Christ	93
The marks of the Church	96
The authority of the Church	100
The communion of Saints	103
The forgiveness of sins	106
The resurrection of the body	109
Life everlasting	112

## PART II.

### THE DUTIES OF RELIGION.

Faith	115
Hope	118
Charity	121
The adoration due to God	124
The behaviour to be observed in places of worship	127
Swearing	129
The observance of the Sunday	132
The love of our neighbour	135
The duty of children to their parents	137
The duty of scholars to their masters	140
Murder, &c.	143
Scandal	145
Impurity	148
Bad company	151
Immoral books	153
Plays	156
Theft	159
Lying	161
Detraction	163

Rash Judgment - . . . . .	166
Immodest thoughts - . . . . .	168
Covetous desires - . . . . .	170
The precepts of the Church : and first, the obser- vance of Holidays - . . . . .	173
The obligation of hearing mass on Sundays and Holi- days - . . . . .	175
The annual confession of our sins - . . . . .	177
The paschal communion - . . . . .	180
The precept of fasting - . . . . .	182
The precept of abstinence - . . . . .	185
Sin - . . . . .	187
The capital vices : and first, Pride - . . . . .	189
Covetousness - . . . . .	192
Lust - . . . . .	195
Envy - . . . . .	197
Gluttony - . . . . .	200
Anger - . . . . .	203
Sloth - . . . . .	205

### PART III.

#### THE RESOURCES OF RELIGION.

The necessity of grace, and the means of obtaining it	207
The sacraments in general - . . . . .	212
Baptism - . . . . .	215
Baptismal vows - . . . . .	218
Confirmation - . . . . .	220
The dispositions for confirmation - . . . . .	223
The obligations of confirmation - . . . . .	226
Penance - . . . . .	228
Contrition - . . . . .	231
Purposes of amendment - . . . . .	234
Confession - . . . . .	237
The crime of concealment in confession - . . . . .	240
Satisfaction - . . . . .	243
Indulgences - . . . . .	246
The eucharist - . . . . .	249
The dispositions for the eucharist - . . . . .	252



The effects of the eucharist	- - - - -	254
Unworthy communion	- - - - -	257
Frequent communion	- - - - -	260
The sacrifice of the mass	- - - - -	263
Extreme unction	- - - - -	265
Holy Order	- - - - -	268
Matrimony	- - - - -	271
The necessity of prayer	- - - - -	273
The efficacy of prayer	- - - - -	276
The conditions of prayer	- - - - -	278
The Lord's prayer	- - - - -	281
The first petition of the Lord's prayer	- - - - -	283
The second petition	- - - - -	286
The third petition	- - - - -	288
The fourth petition	- - - - -	291
The fifth petition	- - - - -	293
The sixth petition	- - - - -	296
The seventh petition	- - - - -	298
The angelical salutation	- - - - -	300

# PART I.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION.

---

### INTRODUCTION.

#### ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF RELIGION.

*Blessed is the man, whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord! and shalt teach him out of thy law. Ps. xciii. 12.*

To know religion is man's greatest interest, and to apply himself to the study of it his first obligation. In your more tender years, my dear Theophilus, you were introduced to an acquaintance with its rudiments and principles. But the lessons you were then taught, were adapted to your capacity, and proportioned to your weakness. Now, however, as reason begins to open, and to give a bias to your judgment, a more extensive elucidation of this important subject becomes essentially requisite.

With this view, I purpose to set before you, in the following lectures, the documents of Christianity in a new and interesting light. No longer content with merely proposing the tenets of your faith, I will endeavour to unfold to you the solid and decisive motives, upon which your assent to those tenets must be founded. While I show you the rule, that religion prescribes, I will point out the propriety and wisdom, on which they are constituted: and while I expose the treasures of grace, that are laid open to you by faith, I will try to make you sensible of their inestimable value.

Two things contribute to make this undertaking peculiarly useful in your present circumstances. The first of these is the corruption, in this regard, of what is usually termed the

world, or that assemblage of mankind, into which you are about to enter. You will there meet with those, who do not hesitate to blaspheme what they are totally ignorant of; who dare to weigh the word of God in the scales of erring reason; who treat as vulgar prejudices the most respectable and certain truths. If, unfortunately, circumstances will not always permit you to avoid their society, you will at least be supplied with proofs, to oppose to their seductive errors. And, above all things, I warn you not to be dazzled by the glare of irreligious sophistry; not to mistake blasphemy for reason, or ridicule for argument. On such occasions, recall the principles you first imbibed; and confirm yourself therein, by frequently reading some of the many excellent authors, who are not wanting in any language, that give to this momentous subject its full energy and precision. The better informed you are, the more you will be strengthened in the tenets of your faith: and the more seriously you apply to the study of religion, the more clearly will you perceive in it the marks of the Divinity.

The second reason, and which adds a still greater weight to the utility of my present attempt, is the illusion of your passions, of which, ere it be long, you will feel the impulsive tumult. The heart being once disordered, a mental darkness succeeds, which clouds the understanding and dims its sight. Whatever thwarts our inclinations is seen with false optics: and this is particularly the case with religion, which is at war with all our passions. Do not, then, consult them I entreat you, in an affair of such importance; nor ever let the desire of gratifying them prevail on you to forsake the truth. However urgent they may be, prudence forbids you to listen to them, where the issue may prove so fatal.

If you adhere faithfully to this advice, there is no doubt but you will preserve the precious treasure of faith. For the two chief sources of infidelity are ignorance and depravity. We may admire, perchance, the depth of knowledge, the brilliancy of talents, and the superiority of genius, that are sometimes found in those who are usually called free-thinkers. But it is not less true, that these very persons, so conversant in human sciences, are equally ignorant in that of religion. In general, their acquaintance with this subject goes no farther than the instructions, received in their childhood, of which the traces, originally but faint, are very soon erased. In process of time, they contract a contempt for this kind of

learning, as infinitely beneath them; and from that time forward, not one single hour of serious application do they devote to this study. Thus it is with some: while others know nothing of religion, but through the medium of writings, as licentious as they are impious. Their sole acquaintance is with the blasphemous calumnies, by which it is vilified; and which have taught them to become incredulous, before they knew what it was to believe.

Such people as these know nothing of that religion, which is so worthy of the Deity, so adapted to the wants of man, and so essential to his happiness. They know nothing of that admirable distribution of its different parts, which connect the whole; nor of that perfect harmony between the old and the new testament, which renders religion as venerable for its antiquity, as it is sublime in its doctrine. Hence, a wide range is opened for the operation of the passions. Religion, only imperfectly understood, opposes but a feeble barrier to their impetuous violence. From first doubting a doctrine, which combats their love of pleasure, they conclude by throwing off the yoke of faith, and with it, that of virtue.

To remedy so great an evil, it will readily occur to you, that it is necessary the youthful mind should be more fully enlightened, both as to the principles of religion, and the solid grounds of faith. For a knowledge of religion, while it takes away one cause of incredulity, that of ignorance, will diminish the influence of the other, depravity; by teaching the mind to love and to fear the Supreme Being. But if, in spite of these advantages, a young man should be so deluded, as to yield to the force of passion, there would still be a resource left him, in the midst of his extravagancies. The instructions already received, aided by the reproaches of an uneasy and censoring conscience, would incessantly operate to reclaim him to his duty; and a ray of hope would remain to his friends, of seeing him, some time or other at least, restored to the path of virtue.

Apply yourself then in earnest, my dear child, to the study of religion. Engrave its saving documents deeply on your understanding, and still more deeply on your heart. And while, with a laudable ardour, you endeavour to advance in the attainment of human knowledge, forget not that your chief, your most essential study ought to be that of religion, on which depends your eternal destiny.

O God! give us a true relish for this heavenly science, and

a fervent desire of improving therein: give thy blessing to our endeavours, by the sweet effusion of thy grace. Enlighten the darkness of our understanding, by the knowledge of thy law: and soften the obduracy of our hearts, by the unction of its dictates. Give us that docility of mind, which may subject our reason to faith, and the perverseness of our nature to the love of thy sacred precepts. With this disposition, even thy little ones become wise; a resemblance to whom thou hast assured us we must bear, if we hope to learn thy law, and to inherit thy kingdom.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

*He that cometh to God, must believe that he is.* Heb. xi. 6.

Is there then a God? Yes, my dear Theophilus, there certainly is: and this, the most important of all truths, you were originally taught in the first lessons of your childhood. However, to retrace the impressions then made upon you, and to make them still deeper, I will here recapitulate the proofs, at that time offered to you, of this main article; on which, as on a solid basis, rests the whole fabric of religion.

Every thing, both without and within you, attests that there is a God. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and view the magnificent scene that is there presented to you; the immense canopy of the vaulted firmament, thickly set with shining orbs; especially the sun, whose vivific splendour rules the day, and the moon, whose milder influence enlivens the night. Observe the regular motion of these majestic bodies, with their unerring steadiness in their stated courses; and, in consequence thereof, the uninterrupted succession of the seasons, and the sure return of night and day. To what shall we ascribe this invariable order, unless to the agency of a God, no less powerful than wise?

Turn, now, your eyes downwards, and see the wonders which the earth exhibits. Behold the vast profusion of animals, of different kinds, that stock its pastures; the infinite



variety of trees, plants, and flowers, that decorate its surface; the innumerable shoals of fish, that inhabit its waters; and tell me, who but a God could be their author? Can they be the work of man? Not all the ingenuity of the whole human race is able to give animation to a single fly. Shall we attribute them to chance? But suppose I was to tell you that the city of London, with its environs, was the work of chance, that the materials of which it is composed, were brought thither by accident, and fortuitously arranged in the manner in which they now appear, would you think me worthy of belief? Rather, would you not consider me as a madman, for entertaining an opinion so inconsistent with reason? Extend this reflection farther, and apply it to the universe. You will need no other proof to be convinced of the wild folly of a system so extravagant.

Finally, Theophilus, contemplate yourself; and, in the first place, your body. This you will find a work of admirable construction: a work, in which the skill of the artificer is no less apparent than his power; and in which, if the plan denotes a Superior wisdom, the execution attests an Almighty hand. It is then the work of a God; that is, of a being of infinite power and intelligence. For this, and no other, is the idea, which this term conveys. And, indeed, to whom else shall we assign it? If you tell me to nature; I answer that either the word *nature* is a name without a meaning; or, if it imports any thing, it is that all-wise and powerful influence, which is the Divinity itself.

Secondly, besides the body, you have also a soul. And this soul is not composed of matter like the body; for it *thinks*, of which matter is incapable. Yet this soul, though altogether spiritual, is united to your material body; and that by a connexion so intimate, as to partake of all its pleasures, and to sympathize in all its pains. And whence this surprising union of two natures so dissimilar, this wonderful correspondence between what to us might seem incompatible, but from the hand of an Almighty artist, who understands his own works?

An additional proof of the existence of God are those sentiments of joy and sorrow, which you involuntarily experience. Was your mind at your own disposal, there is no room to doubt what state you would wish to keep it in. But since it is not so, you find yourself exposed to a perpetual vicissitude of temper; which compels you to own that you are not master

of yourself; but that you depend on a Sovereign ruler, who disposes of you as he pleases. And who is this but God? Hence, if any accident surprises, or danger alarms you, you call out, and that spontaneously, *O God!*—an exclamation, says Tertullian, which is not the effect of reflection, but the acknowledgment of a soul, that naturally feels the existence of a Supreme Being, and its own dependence on him.

It is certain then, Theophilus, that we bear in our persons the impress of the Deity: an impress stamped upon us in the most legible characters; an impress as universal, as it is strongly marked, and which the most savage people have at all times confessed. We find nations destitute of civil establishments, of institutions, of laws, and of every species of social ties: but none do we find, in which the notion of a God does not prevail. On this head, the consent of mankind has ever been general. However different their conceptions as to his external form or attributes, all agree in admitting the existence of a Being, the Arbiter of the universe and the object of its worship. Nor is it possible to ascribe this universal consent to any human combination. The distance of time and place, and the contrariety of dispositions, will not allow the supposition. The sole finger of the Creator, who originally imprinted this idea, can account for its general prevalence throughout every age and climate.

Yes, O God! thou hast stamped all thy works so visibly with the impression of thy grandeur, that the most ignorant cannot mistake it. The heavens announce thy glory, and the firmament thy power. The wide extended sky, with the luminaries that adorn it; the earth, rich with verdure and incessant vegetation; the fathomless abyss of waters, so obedient to thy word; all with one accord proclaim the wonders of thy omnipotence. Of this the faintest dawn of reason is sufficient to convince us. Never suffer us, then, we entreat thee, to permit this sacred light to be obscured by our passions. Preserve our hearts untainted; and we shall ever see thee in thy works; for a corrupted heart alone can possibly overlook thee. May we use thy creatures as steps, to ascend to the contemplation of thyself. This, my God! I will strive to do; that whilst I behold them, I may in them behold, and respectfully adore thee, their sovereign Creator.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must contemplate God in his creatures.

## CHAPTER II.

## ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and of his greatness there is no end. Ps. cxliv. 3.*

So transcendently great is God, and so limited is our understanding, that it is not possible for us to conceive a just idea of him. The knowledge that reason and even faith afford us of him, is at best but faint and imperfect. Such, however, as it is, Theophilus, it suffices for this life, and merits all your attention.

No higher conception can be framed of the Deity, than that which he gives us of himself, when he says, *I am, who am*, Exod. iii. 14. An idea the most sublime; and which bespeaks whatever can be imagined great of him. *I am, who am*, as if he had said, I am the being of beings—the source and principle of whatever exists, from whom every thing else derives its origin: whatever you see around you draws its existence from me, and holds it at my pleasure. I alone am self-existent, independent, and immutable. Hence it follows, that God possesses all perfections, and that, in an unlimited degree. Let us pursue this idea, and endeavour to develop it.

First then, God is *a spirit*, that is a being purely intellectual, without body, shape, or colour. He can have no resemblance to any thing we see; because, whatever strikes our senses is material; which is wholly incompatible with the notion, we justly form, of a being infinitely perfect. Our soul alone is like to, and can give us an idea of him. This also is a spiritual being, as God is; but with a disparity, that must be noticed; viz. that there is an infinite distance between a Supreme intelligence, such as God, and a created one, such as our soul. The powers of our soul are contracted and imperfect: those of the Deity extend to all things: his thoughts are as much exalted above the thoughts of man, as are the heavens above the earth.

Secondly, God is *eternal*. He was prior to all created objects; for they are the work of his hands. He was prior to all time; for from him it has its beginning. The time was,

when the heavens and the earth had no existence: and the time will come, when they shall both of them perish. Not so however, with God. As he never had a beginning, so he will never have an end. Before the birth of ages, God existed in himself; and nothing was there besides him. *Before the mountains were formed, says the inspired penman, and before the foundations of the earth were balanced, thou wast, O Lord! Thou reachest from eternity to eternity. The works of thy hands shall perish; but thou remainest for ever; and thy years shall never fail.*

Thirdly, God is *omnipotent*. So he styles himself in the sacred writings. His power knows no bounds. He can do whatever he pleases; even give existence to things, that before had none; as he has to the world we live in, and could to a thousand more, with equal ease and facility. *He calls things that are not, says the Psalmist, as if they were;* and they obey his awful summons. For nothing can withstand or control his Almighty power.

Fourthly, God is *independent*: for on whom should he depend, who is the Sovereign Lord of all things? We, indeed, as his creatures, depend continually on him; and this our dependence is truly universal: for, without him, we can do nothing. Nay more, without his support, we should instantly relapse into that state of non-existence, from which he originally drew us. But God depends on nothing. The primary cause of all other beings, he is from himself alone. The inexhaustible source of all good, every perfection is inherent in him, and he imparts them as he pleases. Sovereignly happy, he suffices for himself, and stands in need of no one. The absolute Master of all nature, he has neither superior nor equal.

Fifthly, God is *immutable*. What he is, he always was, and always will be. *I am the Lord, he says of himself, and cannot change.* Man never continues in a fixed and permanent state. For, on one side, his body, exposed to the alterations of the different periods of life, passes successively from vigour to imbecility, from health to disease, from life to death. Whilst on the other, his mind is often varying, whether from inconstancy or conviction: what yesterday he courted, to-day he contemns; and what to-day he dislikes, to-morrow he may be enamoured with. But in God, there is no vicissitude, nor the faintest shadow of instability. *His will, says the Prophet, is eternal, and his thoughts are unchangeable.*

Lastly, God is *infinite*: for neither his essence, nor his attri-

butes admit of any limits. In him are centred all possible perfections, and each of them he possesses in an infinite degree. Thus, he is not only just, but infinitely just; not only holy, but infinitely holy, &c. For as the number of his attributes is unbounded, so is the extent of them illimitable.

O God! how great art thou, and how deserving of our homage! How exalted are thy perfections beyond our comprehension! But shall we therefore cease to investigate and to admire them? No. For why hast thou given us an understanding, but to study and to contemplate them? Why a tongue, but to announce, and to publish what we know of them? Our heart tells us incessantly that it was made but to love thee. For thou art infinitely good, as well as infinitely wise: not less amiable for thy beauty, than formidable by thy power. O inexhaustible source of bounty! from thee alone flows every good. O Supreme and infinite Deity! We can neither give a just idea of thee to others, nor comprehend thee ourselves. For what is man, to pretend to praise thee? A vile reptile of the earth, to presume to sound the depth of thy adorable perfections? At the sight of thy glorious majesty, what better can I do, than, prostrate at thy feet, adore thee in silent rapture? This mute and respectful homage will more exalt thy grandeur, than all the eulogies and praises my unworthy tongue can utter.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must humble ourselves before God.

---

## CHAPTER III.

### ON THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

*In his hands are all the ends of the earth. Ps. xciv. 4.*

God is in heaven, on earth, and in all places whatsoever; and this his universal presence is, by Divines, termed *ubiquity*; that is, an unconfined existence without bounds or limitation.



The sacred writings, in almost every page, inculcate this important truth. *Do I not fill the heavens and the earth, said the Lord?* Yes, says St. Paul: *for in him we breathe, we move, and we exist.* Go where we will, we shall always find him present. For *whither shall I fly*, exclaims David, to avoid thy sight, O God? *If I ascend to heaven, thou art there. If I descend to the lowest possible abyss, thou still art there.* Whichever way I turn myself, it is thy hand that guides, thy power that sustains me. Yes, my dear Theophilus, it is certain that God is in all things, and that all things are in God: that he animates, gives motion to, and supports every being. It is certain that we live continually in his presence: that he hears all our words, and sees all our actions: that he even penetrates into the inmost recesses of our hearts, and is witness to all our thoughts and latent inclinations. No obscurity so great, as to conceal us from his searching eyes. *I have said*, continues the pious king, perhaps *darkness* may prevent his seeing me. But, O how vain! for the most obscure and gloomy *night* is as the clearest *daylight* to him.

No stronger proof need we require of the divine omnipresence, than the testimony of our own heart. For whence that remorse, which troubles us, upon the commission of any crime, however secret or concealed? Whence those keen and severe reproaches, with which our conscience then disquiets us? In vain does the sinner strive to smother and to silence them. The piercing voice of that internal censor compels him to attend. Gladly could he wish to fly from his own heart, and to escape, as I may say, from himself. But, go where he will, the invisible judge, whom he carries in his breast, follows him, and upbraids him with his wickedness. And who is this watchful censor? what that voice so clamorous? who that persecuting judge, from whom darkness itself cannot protect him, but the incorruptible truth, the eternal justice of the Deity, the assured witness of all we do.

Never then forget, Theophilus, that God is always with you, and that you at no time are alone. Remember that, however removed you may suppose yourself from the observation of mankind, you still are in the sight of an invisible witness, whose eye is always upon you. No idea can be more effectual to preserve you from sin. The recollection of the divine presence will blunt the arrows of your infernal enemy, and foil his attempts upon you.—For how can you dare to sin, when convinced you cannot do it, but under the immediate

inspection of your God? Can you be so insolent, as to commit that in his presence, what you would be afraid to do in the face of any ordinary superior.

*Keep God, therefore, ever in view;* as formerly Tobias advised his son. And, if, at any time, you find yourself solicited to sin, answer with St. Austin; "Show me the place where God will not see me; till then molest me not: for to offend him before his eyes, is a degree of rashness and temerity, which I have not yet attained to."

O my God! thou art every where present, for *the heavens and the earth are filled with the majesty of thy glory.* How insensible, then, must I have been, to have lived so long without thinking of thee! to have paid no attention to thee, in whom alone I existed. Alas, my God! I confess that this forgetfulness of thy sacred presence has been the cause of all my sins. If already I have so often offended thee, it was because I was unmindful that thou wert continually with me. And, if still I commit many faults, it is because, in my carelessness, I frequently lose sight of thee. Henceforth, however, I will be more attentive to thee. I will walk in thy presence, and bear before my eyes this salutary reflection. This shall be my support in the time of temptation, and my comfort in the hour of sorrow. This shall rouse my langour, animate my tepidity, and encourage me to persevere in the faithful discharge of all my duties.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must be mindful of the presence of God.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### ON THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

*His wisdom reacheth from end to end mightily; and ordereth all things sweetly.* Wis. viii. 1.

**THINK** not, Theophilus, that God, after having made his creatures, leaves them to themselves, or abandons them to

chance. Since he has deigned to create them, he cannot be said to demean him, by paying regard to their welfare.—Nor can any power, inferior to that which first gave them birth, be competent to maintain them in due harmony and order. With watchful care, therefore, he continues to preside over them; and this vigilant attention we denominate his *Providence*. For as to chance, it is a mere sound. He directs, and governs all things; and without his command, or at least his permission, nothing certainly does happen. Whatever good is done, is the effect of his command, and what he both wills and rewards; whatever evil, the consequence of his permission only, and what he forbids and punishes: and yet he condescends to tolerate it; both because he is unwilling to trench upon our liberty; as also, because he is able, whenever it so pleases him, to draw good from evil itself.

The sacred volumes throughout, attest the influence of God's providence: nor is there any thing more striking in them, than their perpetual attention to represent every event as the effect of his interference. While the Jewish people continued faithful to him, he heaped his blessings on them, and crowned them with success. But no sooner did they forsake him, and violate his law, than punishment and misfortune followed their infidelity.

Nor does the divine superintendence extend only to empires, and the weighty rule of nations. The most diminutive of beings is equally an object of its care; and it is no less attentive to the welfare of each individual, than if that sole individual existed in the world. *Not a sparrow falls to the ground, says Christ, without the direction of your heavenly Father; who numbers the hairs of your head, and disposes of them, as he wills.*

From among the many examples, which the Scriptures afford of this interposition of the Deity, in the direction of human affairs, I will single out two. The first is that of Joseph; who being sold by his brethren, and conducted into Egypt, is there loaded with irons, and cast into prison. *But God, says the holy text, descended with him, into the dungeon, and did not forsake him in his chains.* Some time after, the persecuted Joseph is released, with honour, from his confinement, and placed at the head of the Egyptian kingdom, which he had entered as a slave. In discovering himself to his brethren, he tells them, *I came hither, not by your machination, but by the order of the Almighty; thus*

ascribing to the will of Providence, what appeared to be merely the work of man. A second instance is that of Moses: while yet an infant, he is exposed by the command of Pharaoh, on the banks of the river Nile. By the guidance of Providence, the daughter of the same king comes to the very place, where the babe was laid. Touched with compassion, she orders it to be taken up, and conveyed to the palace itself, where she rears it with all the tenderness that could be expected from a mother. And who then was it that so fortunately conducted her to the relief of this helpless infant? Who, that infused those sentiments of piety, and inspired her with the design of adopting it for her own? Who, I say, but God, intending this child, in time, to be the deliverer of his people?

But is it necessary, to have recourse to history, Theophilus, to convince you there is a Providence? Does not the regular growing and ripening of the corn, of the grass and of the various productions of the earth sufficiently attest it? And does not the unfailing renewal of what is required for their subsistence, show the solicitude of a parent, ever regardful of his childrens' welfare, and attentive to their wants?

Nor vainly imagine that this care of his creatures can give him any trouble, or intrude upon his rest. To a wisdom and power infinite as his, every thing is easy. Unlike to man, whose contracted powers oblige him to neglect things of small moment, that he may attend to the more important, His comprehensive reach embraces every thing. It is this that gives fertility to the earth, and animation to all nature—Even insensible things, says the Psalmist, *fire, hail, winds and storms obey his voice*, and execute his will: for it is at his command that the clouds overspread the face of the heavens, and the rain refreshes the earth. Nor yet again doubt of his providence, because he sometimes suffers misery to be the portion of the virtuous, while the wicked roll in plenty, and riot in delights. If he permits the just man to be afflicted in this world, it is to make proof of his sincerity, and to reward him magnificently in the next. For he knows that these short and transitory sufferings will hereafter ensure to him an unfading wreath of glory.

The establishment of this consolatory article, brings with it two obligations. First, as there is a Providence, we are bound to resign ourselves implicitly to its guidance. We must be grateful to its bounty, for the favours it confers upon us; and submissive to its correction, when it thinks proper

to chastise us; in adversity, as in prosperity, adoring equally its dispensations. Secondly, we must confide in Providence; and patiently expect from the hand of the Almighty whatever our necessities, whether temporal or spiritual, oblige us to ask of him. *Behold the birds of the air, says Christ; they neither sow nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? See the lilies of the field: they labour not, nor do they spin. Nevertheless, not Solomon, in all his glory, was arrayed like one of them. Now, if God so clothe the grass of the field,\** how much more care will he take of you, who are his well beloved children? To diffide in his parental kindness would be to offer him a gross affront.

O my God! I believe that nothing can happen to me, but by thy order or permission; and I therefore resign myself entirely to the guidance of thy providence. Thou knowest what is for my good much better than I myself do. Thou discernest my wants and my inability to help them. Dispose of me, in all things, according to thy pleasure; for no other wish ought I to have but the accomplishment of thy will. In pain and in ease, in sickness and in health, I will bless thy sacred name. Thou art my Creator and my Father. Wilt thou abandon a child who puts his confidence in thee? No my God! Whilst I trust in thee, nothing in life can hurt me: every thing, on the contrary, will turn to my advantage. In whatever I may suffer, I will not regard the hand of man, whom thou usest as thy instrument; but the ordinance of thy will, which seeks only my welfare; and, perfectly resigned to thy divine dispensations, I will submit to afflictions as the means, which thou employest to effect my salvation. Hitherto, thy providence has led me as it were, by the hand; and the whole course of my life bears witness to the benevolence of thy paternal attention. Never, then, let me be so ungrateful as to distrust thy loving kindness, to which I stand indebted for such accumulated favours.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must implicitly resign ourselves to the will of the Almighty.

\* Math. vi. 26—30.

## CHAPTER V.

## ON THE NECESSITY OF RELIGION.

*Fear the Lord, and give him honour. Apoc. xiv. 7.*

RELIGION consists in rendering to God that sovereign homage, which is his indubitable right, as the Supreme Being. And this sovereign honour is due to him from us, as well on account of his infinite perfections, as for the innumerable blessings we receive at his hands. The greatness, the justice, the power of God are infinite: our duty therefore requires of us to fear and to respect him. His goodness is alike unbounded, and this challenges our love and our warmest attachment.—Yes, Theophilus, it is God, you know, who made you. It is from his beneficent hand you hold whatever you possess. Every thing you have, whether as to soul or body, is the gratuitous gift of his inexhaustible bounty. Nor does his affection stop here. What he designs for you, in the next life, infinitely surpasses whatever he gives you in this: his intention is to crown you there with everlasting happiness.

See, then, how much you owe to God, and what, in consequence, your duty calls for. Your obligations to him are, without comparison, greater than those of a child to a parent. And what would you think of a child, who should make no other return to the most affectionate parent, than that of indifference and coldness? Would you not justly abhor him, as an unnatural monster? Nor let us idly imagine that God is so far raised above us, as to be unconcerned about our honouring him. It is true, he does not want our homage. But, at the same time, he is just; and, of course, likes whatever is conformable to reason and good order; and it is certainly agreeable to both, that the creature should revere and pay acknowledgment to its Creator. God, therefore, exacts our service, not as a matter that can be any ways advantageous to himself; but as a duty most essentially incumbent upon us. For having endued man with the power of knowing and loving him, can it be supposed that he does not require him to comply with so important an obligation?

This may suffice to convince you that we, on our part, owe

to God, and that God on his, demands of us a religious obedience and worship. It remains only to point out to you its nature and qualities. First, then, it must be *interior*, that is, we must know him and love him. It is in this knowledge and love of the Deity that consists the very essence of religion; nor can we honour him, as we ought, without this homage of the mind and heart. *For God, says Christ, is a spirit, whom we must adore in spirit and in truth.* Secondly, this worship must be *exterior*; that is, such as may outwardly manifest our internal dispositions. Our bodies, as well as our souls, are the work of the great Creator. It is just, therefore, they should unite in paying him their tribute; and that the body, as well as the mind, should testify its acknowledgment. Were we purely intellectual beings, our religious worship might be wholly spiritual. But composed as we are, of both a body and a soul, the work would be imperfect, if the body had not a share in it. Nor, indeed, is it possible that it should not. The slightest attention to ourselves will satisfy us that the mind is no sooner affected with any sentiment or impression, than it manifests that impression outwardly, by the gestures of the body, which may be properly styled the interpreters of its feelings. Suppose a man, for instance, penetrated with the idea of God, struck with awe at the sight of his perfections, or with a grateful confidence at the view of his bounty, would not your imagination paint him, either as humbly prostrate in the presence of the Divinity; or, with hands and eyes uplifted, singing thankfully his praises? Or do you not think, my dear child, that were these happy dispositions yours, you would not manifest them externally by visible marks and tokens? Moreover, I add that the worship, we pay to the Deity must also be *public*. For as men are formed to live in society, it behoves them to meet together, and to adore him in common, who is the common parent of all. Without a *public* worship, religion must soon fall to the ground. Mutual exhortations and the edification of good example are requisite to animate us in the practice of our duties. Hence, from the beginning of the world, men have always been in the habit of assembling, to render their homage in concert to the Author of their existence. We find this *public* worship universally established; different, I allow, in manner, according to the difference of national character; but uniform in its principle, and grounded on the same motive, viz. the obligation of revering the Sovereign of the universe. For the same light that directs

us to the knowledge of his existence, discovers to us the necessity of paying him the tribute of adoration.

Thou hast made man, O Lord! for the sole purpose of thy glory; and it is a duty indispensably incumbent on him, to worship thee by religion. Thou hast bestowed my being on me for no other end, but to know, to love, and to serve thee: whatever I have or am, I stand indebted to thee for it: and the voice of justice tells me I ought to devote it all to thee. All the faculties of my soul and body should be occupied about thee: my understanding in knowing, my will in loving, and my tongue in praising thee. What other creature but man could render thee that homage, which thou claimest so justly? Without him, all nature is mute: and it is therefore his part particularly to pay thee that acknowledgment, which is due to thee from thy works. This is what thou hast designed him for: since having made every thing else for his use, thou enjoimest him to refer all to thee, and to immolate to thy glory the being thou hast given him. I am sensible, O my God! that in the discharge of this duty consists all my happiness: for happy I cannot be, but in attaching myself to thee, who alone canst satisfy the desires of my heart. O Source of all our good! To know thee, is the only science; to love thee, the only pleasure; and to serve thee, the only honour, that can be worth our pursuit.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must refer every thing to God.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

### ON THE UNITY OF GOD.

*I am the Lord, and there is none else: there is no God besides me. Is. xlv. 5.*

To be satisfied, Theophilus, that there is but one God, and that there cannot be more, you need but reflect upon the import of the word. For by this sacred name we understand a



*Sovereign* being, the *Supreme* Lord and master of all thing. Now, is it not clear that, as *Sovereign*, he can be but one? or how can he be *Supreme*, if he admits of a rival?

The attributes of God also manifest his unity. The title of *immense* can belong but to one: that is, to him alone, who fills all things, and out of whom there is nothing. The idea of a competitor is inconsistent with *infinite majesty*, which possesses in itself the plenitude of greatness. The name of *omnipotent* would ill suit a Being that might be controlled by another, of equal jurisdiction.

In repeated passages of the Scripture, this point is pressed upon us, in the most marked and expressive terms. *I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me. That they may know, who are from the rising of the sun, and they who are from the west, that there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is none else.* Isa. xlv. 6. To make this truth more evident, in the time of the old law, God allowed one only temple, for the performance of his service; and one sole altar, whereon to offer him sacrifice.

It seems wonderful that a thing so clear should so long have escaped the knowledge of antiquity; and that almost all the nations of the earth should have unanimously adored a plurality of Gods. But this unaccountable blindness was the effect of sin. On the creation of man, God made himself known to him. At that moment, man was conscious that there was but one Supreme Being,—the source and the support of every thing created. This plain and simple system he transmitted to this offspring, who, for some time, adhered to it, as a matter unquestionable. Tradition alone was then sufficient to authorize it; and this tradition, moreover, was so conformable to reason, as to preclude all apprehensions of its being forgotten, or obscured. But reason, weakened by sin, soon began to be perverted. In proportion as man lost sight of the view of his origin, he confounded the ideas, which he had received from his forefathers; and refused to adore any thing but what he could see. Hence the errors of Idolatry became universally prevalent. The idea of the Creator being blended with that of the creature, every thing was worshipped, in which was the appearance of extraordinary power. The first objects of adoration were the sun and the moon, whose influence was so remote. To these succeeded heroes and conquerors, with all their train of devastation. So astonishing was the progress of this wide-extended evil, that the very

beasts and reptiles had their votaries and followers. Every thing was God but God himself; and the world which he had formed for the manifestation of his power, seemed now to be converted into a temple of idols: and yet more; even human passions and vices had altars erected to them. In fine, in this deplorable state of darkness, man blindly bent his knee to the work of his own hands. He fancied he could inspire a log with the spirit of the Deity; and so utterly had he forgotten that God was his Maker, that he imagined himself capable of making a God, when he pleased. Each different nation had its particular Deities; of which some presided over the heavens, others over the land and waters, and a third sort over the regions below.

An infatuation so astonishing cannot fail to surprise you. For you are sufficiently informed to know that an infinite power alone could give existence to created nature; and that none but an infinite wisdom could be competent to govern it. You are convinced that the order which pervades the great system, attests one sole Creator, one individual and only Master; and that with a plurality of Gods, this admirable order must, of course, be incompatible.

Nevertheless, this excess of folly is not imputable to the grosser and more ignorant of mankind: the most polished and enlightened people were equally guilty of it. The Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, in point of abilities and science, stood undoubtedly unrivalled; but in matters of Religion, they were as much in the dark, as others. Among these nations, oratory, poetry, philosophy, &c., were carried successively to the highest pitch of perfection: but, as to the nature of the Divinity, their ignorance was consummate. And what would appear inconceivable, if not evinced by experience, this absurdest of delusions was not only the most extensive, but the most incorrigible in its progress. Nor could mankind have ever emerged from its baneful oppression, had not a supernatural light come in to the assistance of reason, and had not God spoken in person, and expressly declared in what manner he would be served.

Alas! O Lord! Unless thou hadst vouchsafed to dissipate the gloom, we ourselves should now be plunged in the same fatal darkness. Reason, of itself, would have been as insufficient for us, as for those of our race, who have lived ignorant of thee. The use men made of it, for so many ages, but too clearly shows to what delusive purpose we ourselves

should have turned it. Its light, obscured by sin, would have left us, like them, under the grossest of errors, and in the ignorance of what most imports us to know. But thou hast deigned to instruct mankind thyself; and to reveal to them not only the more simple truths, which time had obliterated, but also the mysteries of thy sacred Essence, and the inscrutable designs of thy infinite mercy. O God! what thanks do we not owe thee, for the light of Religion, which teaches us more in the first lessons of our infancy, than ever was known to all the sages of antiquity! Receive then, our humble acknowledgments for having delivered us from such blindness. For what a blindness it is to suppose a plurality of Gods! Thou, O Lord! art supreme, and no other can equal thee. Thou art immense, and fillest every thing by thy unbounded omnipresence. Thou art the fountain of all things, and without thee there is nothing. Perish then those chimeras, which would impiously claim that homage, which is due to thee alone.—*To the king of ages, immortal, and invisible, the only God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever.\** Amen.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must be thankful to God for having called us to his light, and to the knowledge of the truth.

## CHAPTER VII.

### ON THE MYSTERY OF THE SACRED TRINITY.

*There are three who give testimony in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.*  
1 John v. 7.

ALTHOUGH there is but one God, yet in this one God there are three distinct persons. For God, who is single and simple in his nature, is, nevertheless, the Father, the Son, and

\* 1 Tim. i. 17.

the Holy Ghost. The Father is not the Son; nor is the Holy Ghost either the Son or the Father. Each of the three persons is itself, and no other; and all three together are but one and the same God. This is, by no means, an article, that reason can discover or comprehend; it is a mystery, which we learn from the documents of revelation.

The pages of the Scripture and the ceremonies of religion alike inculcate this fundamental truth. God revealed this mystery in an evident manner, at the baptism of Jesus Christ. For then was heard the voice of the Father, owning him publicly for his *beloved Son*; and then was seen the Holy Ghost, under the appearance of a dove, descending on and overshadowing him. Christ himself declared it plainly, when he commanded his Apostles to baptize all nations, in the name *Of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*; thereby showing these three persons to be equal; and that, by our baptism, we belong to each of them. *For there are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father; the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.*

This mystery is the grand object of our faith; and there is none, to which religion so frequently appeals. All our prayers begin and end by the invocation of the Sacred Trinity. The sign of the cross, which so often occurs in our religious ceremonies and rites, is made in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Thus, you see, my dear Theophilus, that, in your ideas upon this subject, you must neither divide the Divine nature, which is but one; nor confound the persons, who are distinct: that the Son is the same God as the Father, but not the same person: that the Holy Ghost also is the same God as the Father and the Son, but still a distinct person. The Father is so called, because from all eternity he begot a Son, who is the second person of the blessed Trinity; and from the Father and the Son, proceeds the Holy Ghost, who is the third. These three persons are not three Gods, but one God only; because they have but one and the same Divinity, one and the same nature. Whence it follows that they are equal in all things; and that none of them is greater, more powerful, or more ancient than the others; since they have each of them the same greatness, the same power, the same eternity of existence.

This is the substance of what the Deity has disclosed respecting this great mystery;—a mystery so sublime, as to

defy all human reasoning. But God, the unerring wisdom, the infallible truth, has revealed it to us; and on the veracity of his word our faith rests secure. To wish to fathom it would be folly: the powers of reasons are too defective.—For, as there are objects beyond the reach of our sight, and which, of course, we cannot see; so there are things impenetrable to our understanding, and which we are unable to comprehend.

Nor is this the case only in what regards the Divinity. It happens even in the works of nature, which we never call in question. For instance, was an astronomer to tell you that the sun is a million times larger than the earth; and that it is more than ninety-six millions of miles distant from us, your understanding would be at a loss to comprehend his assertion: but yet you would believe it, because told you by a person, who ought to know what he advanced; and you would naturally suppose that, if you did not comprehend it, it was because you were but a child. Let me tell you, then, Theophilus, it is just so with all of us. In things belonging to the Divine nature we all are mere children. When, hereafter, we shall attain the fulness of age, what now obstructs our view will be removed; and we then shall see clearly, what, at present, we can neither penetrate nor conceive. “To wish to sound this mystery,” says St. Austin, “is presumption; to believe it, true devotion; and to know it, the sovereign felicity of our future existence.” It ought to suffice, says the catechism of the Council of Trent, that God himself has revealed it: since we cannot, without folly, refuse our assent to his infallible word.

Let the person, then, whom grace enables to believe this august mystery, entreat God to grant him a blessed immortality; that there, all veils being withdrawn, he may contemplate it without impediment. For as the belief of this grand mystery renders us Christians in this life; so the clear and perfect view of it will make us happy in the life to come.

O my God! I believe, and here solemnly profess, that there is one only God, in three distinct persons, I adore the Father: I adore the Son: I adore the Holy Ghost: and in adoring these three persons. I adore one sole and only Deity. I believe and profess that the Son was begotten by the Father, before the beginning of time. I believe and profess that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and from the Son, before the commencement of ages. I believe these three persons to have

one and the same nature, and one and the same infinity of perfection, without any inequality. It is true, I comprehend not this wonderful mystery: but thou, my God! hast revealed it, and I desire no other evidence. For my reason itself tells me that I cannot act in a manner more conformable to its dictates, than to submit, without reserve, to thy unerring authority. I do not, indeed, see what it is I believe: but this I see, that, to believe it, is what every consideration binds me to: for, when thou art pleased to speak, I have only to listen, and respectfully to assent. Reason is, I know, limited and fallible, and thy word is infallible. I should even be surprised, could I possibly conceive what thou deignest to reveal of thy infinite perfections: for thou wouldest no longer be what thou art, wert thou not incomprehensible: nor would thy wonders deserve that name, were they penetrable to human reason. Instead of wishing to sound so unfathomable a mystery, I return thee my grateful thanks for having disclosed to me what thou art. For what, O God! is man, that thou shouldest make thyself known to him? I obey the dictates of a longing hope, that I shall hereafter contemplate in heaven what I believe here on earth; though, in my present state of weakness, it is above my comprehension.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should never pronounce these words, *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, but with the most profound respect.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ON THE CREATION.

*In the beginning God created heaven and earth. Gen. i. 1.*

THE world which you see, Theophilus, is far from being eternal: six thousand years ago it did not exist. The proof of this is evident in the marks, that are easily traced, of its infancy and origin. For, in going backwards to that era, we

see every thing beginning,—arts and sciences, kingdoms and states. A more early existence is attested by no fact, no monument, no history. The book, that fixes the creation of the world to the date here specified, whilst it is the most ancient of books, is also the most authentic and the most deserving of credit. And the first sentence of it tells us, that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; that is, that he made both them and whatever they contain, by his command, out of nothing. For such has ever been the meaning and the construction affixed to the word *creation*. God existed, at that time, alone; and there was nothing beside himself. But at the instant he willed it, for his will was command enough, the heavens and the earth arose from a state of nonentity, created by his word only, and for the sole purpose of his glory. *For he spoke, and they were made: he commanded, and they were created.\**

Imagine yourself, my dear child, present at the birth of the world. With what astonishment would you have been struck, on seeing a variety of beings present themselves, in all their beauty, at each word of the Almighty? He employed, you know, six days, in completing this great work, which he could have finished in a single moment, with equal facility. But his intention was to show us that he was perfectly free, and exempt from constraint. At first, the earth was shapeless, and entirely bare; its surface was covered over with immeasurable waters. God would not create it ornamented, as it afterwards was, that it might not appear adorned and rich of itself.

On the first day, God created the light. Where was it before? Or how could it shoot forth from the bosom of profound darkness? God says; *Be light made:*† a mode of expression as sublime as simple, and truly characteristic of the grandeur of the Deity. *And light was made.* O God of power! thou callest the light, and it appears: thou drawest it out of darkness, and into the same darkness thou canst replunge it.

On the second day, he made the firmament; that is, that boundless expanse of sky, which we denominate the heavens. *Let there be a firmament made,* says the Lord, *and let it divide the waters, from the waters. And it was so:†* At that time, the firmament was devoid of all ornament: for the

\* Ps. xxxii. 9.

† Gen. i. 3.

† Gen. i. 6. 7.

sun and the stars, which give it its present splendour, were not yet created. It resembled an immense, but unadorned pavilion.

On the third day, God gathered into one place, the waters, which overspread the land; and gave to the latter the power of producing herbs and trees. At his command, a bare and naked surface, became at once a beautiful landscape, diversified with rich meadows and extended plains; with lofty hills, crowned with wood, and pleasant dales, variegated with every kind of fruit and flower. And what is still more admirable; at the same time, each plant was enabled by him, from the seed contained in it, to reproduce itself.

On the fourth day, he created the sun, the moon, and the stars. What wonders does this day witness! Lift up your eyes to the heavens; and behold the lustre of that brilliant orb, which eclipses all the rest. See the stately dignity, with which he begins his daily course; the beauty, that environs him, as he gradually ascends the horizon; the vivid colours, he imparts; the gladness, he dispenses to universal nature. Reflect that this grand luminary is the work of the Almighty. How great then must God be! Contemplate the moon, whose fainter beams are more adapted to the stillness of the night, to temper its obscurity by a soft and mild effulgence. Count, if possible, the stars, my child, and tell me if you can be insensible to a sight so truly glorious. It is for us God made the firmament so resplendent and so majestic. He meant to show us his magnificence, and the inexhaustible fund of brilliancy, that he himself contains.

On the fifth day, God created the fish and the birds. *Let the waters*, he says, *bring forth the creeping creature*, that may swim beneath their surface; *and the fowl, that may fly over the earth, under the firmament of heaven.\** This command, at once stocked the sea with inhabitants, and peopled the air with feathered tribes, no less melodious than gay.

On the sixth day, he produced the animals, that inhabit the earth. *Let the earth bring forth the living creature, in its kind,†* he says; and immediately there sprang up a numberless variety of them; diversified in their shapes, and different in their natures. Some of them he endued with strength, others with cunning, and all of them with the qualities requisite to fill the station, for which he designed them.

\* Gen. i. 20.

† Gen. i. 24.



In fine, all other creatures being formed, God was pleased to make a master for them. But before he did this, he seemed to pause, and, as it were, recollect himself. *Let us make*, he says, *man to our own image and likeness*.\* His body he fashioned out of the mould of the earth. He gave him a straight and upright form, to point him out for the Lord of all the other animals, whose shape bends them downwards. He then animated this body with a breath of his Spirit; viz. by infusing into it an intellectual and immortal soul. On this rests the title man has to any thing great. He not only has a body composed of inert matter: but he likewise has a soul, capable of thinking and loving, and in its nature incorruptible; and in this point consists his resemblance to the Deity. Nothing was now wanting to complete this first man's happiness, but a help-mate like himself, to share his bliss with him. Her then God made out of the man himself, and ensured their fecundity by a special benediction. Thus was marriage first instituted. And as the whole human race descends from these two progenitors, we may learn to consider ourselves as one and the same family.

How admirable, O God, is thy power! How wonderful thy works! One single word of thine sufficed to produce out of nothing all that is. Thy works could bring no addition to thy Sovereign greatness. But they have taught mankind to know thy power and thy wisdom. Every thing is obedient to, because every thing is dependent on thee. With what ease didst thou extend the wide arch of the firmament! With what a profusion of lights hast thou embellished this rich canopy! How great must be thy brightness, when, without injury to thyself, thou impartest it so freely and so abundantly to thy creatures! How ravishing thy beauty, when but a glimpse of it so enchants us! Thou balancest the earth, by the sole disposal of thy will. To make it habitable, thou hast assembled, as in a repository, the waters, and prescribed them their boundaries, which they dare not transgress. The land thou hast rendered fruitful, to accommodate our wants. For it is for us, O Lord! thou hast fertilized it, and enriched it with such treasures. Thou openest thy hand, and loadeest us with blessings. May then all thy works praise thee; and especially man, for whom thou hast made all the rest. May kings and people, princes and subjects, old and young unite

\* Gen. i. 26.

in praising thy name. May every thing in heaven, on earth, in the waters, and in the air, celebrate thy power and extol thy munificence.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we must ever admire the power of the Almighty.

---

## CHAPTER IX.

### ON THE FALL OF MAN, AND ORIGINAL SIN.

*By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned. Rom. v. 12.*

IN coming from the hands of his beneficent Creator, man was pure, uncontaminated, and holy. His understanding, guided by the light of Heaven, showed him whatever it behooved him to know, without the aid of instructions. His will was untainted by any disposition to evil. His mind was serene, and his peace undisturbed. His body, free from sufferings, was even inaccessible to death. What a happy state of being! Such, Theophilus, would have been ours, had Adam persevered in justice and virtue. Our happiness depended on his fidelity to his Maker. But how unfortunately, alas! did we lose it! Man, created free, owed obedience to his Creator. To make him sensible he had a master, and to prove his submission, God laid on him an injunction, no ways difficult to be complied with. Whilst he permitted him the use of whatever else the garden produced, one particular fruit only he restricted him from tasting: and this prohibition he accompanied with a menace, the most severe; viz. the punishment of death, which he assured him should follow the violation of his order. In spite, however, of God's threats, as well as of his favours, the woman suffered herself to be seduced by a wily, artful tempter; and, having eat of the forbidden fruit herself, presented it to the man; and thus involved him also in disobedience and guilt.

Such was the crime of our first parents: a crime of infinite magnitude, and the source of all other crimes. At that instant a total change took place in whatever concerned them. They were stripped of all the advantages that God had favoured them with, at their creation. Their understandings were darkened, their will perverted, and bent upon evil; while the dominion of passion superseded that of reason. Their bodies became subject to pain, infirmities and dissolution; and their souls, by the loss of grace, to eternal and irretrievable death.

These dismal consequences of Adam's sin are entailed on all his posterity; because his sin itself is likewise entailed on all his descendants. By his disobedience to the Deity, he brought ruin on himself; and, with himself, on all mankind, whose common father he is. We are heirs to his fault and to his punishment, as we should otherwise have been to his innocence and to his felicity. All sinned in the first man: all disobeyed in him. Since his crime, then, has become ours, we all of us are guilty, and that, even before our birth. An incomprehensible assertion; but which the authority of faith forbids us to doubt: it being a leading article of the Christian religion, and of the number of those, that are the most clearly marked in Scripture. The holy David says of himself that *he was conceived in iniquity*.<sup>\*</sup> And St. Paul informs us, *By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned*.<sup>†</sup> We are all born sinners, and the children of wrath; whence the name of *original sin*, by which the primary evil is usually denoted. After such explicit declarations, let us seek no other proof. For however great the difficulties, no objection can invalidate the word of truth itself.

To this I shall add but one short reflection more. The very pagan philosophers, by the force of mere reason, had acquired so much light, as if not to be informed of the certainty of this truth, at least to suspect that man was born under the pressure of some guilt. They had been led to this conjecture by the view of the miseries, to which he is subject from his cradle. And in fact, without the belief of this mystery, man himself is a mystery still more incomprehensible. For how, otherwise, shall we explain the palpable inconsistencies that enter into his character? Such dignity and such meanness; so much intelligence and so much ignorance; a strong desire of happiness, and a constant propensity to what leads to

\* Ps. l. 7,

† Rom. v. 12.

misery; what is right he approves, but will not practise; what is wrong he condemns, and still commits. The doctrine of *original sin* alone can solve these difficulties, and reconcile these contradictions. Whatever man has of estimable is derived from his creation and primeval institution,—the melancholy remains of a once noble edifice. Ignorance and vice are the consequences of sin, which has spoiled the work of God, and so far disfigured it as almost to prevent its being known.

Let us not wish, my child, to dive into this inscrutable mystery. Rather, let us adore the judgments of the Deity, who considers the whole race of man as included in that one, of whom he was pleased they should all descend. A resemblance we may suppose of this rigorous justice in any instance, where the infamy of the crime attaches to the family of the person guilty, as well as to himself. But comparisons drawn from human affairs must always be imperfect. The justice of man is but a shadow of that of God. Neither his justice, nor his mercy can be measured by our rules of acting, which fall infinitely short of his, both as to efficacy and extent.

From what an elevation, O God! are we fallen; and into how deep an abyss are we precipitated! Thou didst originally make man, that both himself and his posterity might enjoy eternal bliss. It depended only on himself to preserve, and to transmit to his descendants the great advantages, thou wert pleased to give him at his creation. All thou didst require of him was fidelity and obedience. With these, he would have communicated the same happiness to his offspring; and we should have been born innocent and heirs to thy favour. But, alas! by violating thy command, he forfeited at once whatever he had to expect, both for himself and for us. For we, unhappily, sinned in him, and must partake of his punishment. Through him we come into the world under the sentence of thy displeasure. We stand condemned to all kinds of misery, both temporal and eternal; to the attacks of infirmity, and to the tyranny of concupiscence, to the dissolution of the body, and to the death of the soul. And we must have been for ever excluded from thy amiable presence, had not thy infinite mercy prepared a remedy, and furnished us the means of reconciliation and safety. I adore, O my God! and bow to the sovereignty of thy justice. Make me sensible, by this dreadful punishment, of the enormity of

sin, and the dismal consequences attending it. Teach me to fear it more than death, of which it is the parent; and grant that, by the assistance of thy grace, I may never abuse that liberty, which is still left me unimpaired.

*The Practical Inference.*

'That we must regard sin as the greatest of all evils.

## CHAPTER X.

### ON THE PROMISE OF A SAVIOUR.

*The promise which was made to our fathers, this same hath God fulfilled. Acts xiii. 32—33.*

By sin, man was utterly lost, had not God, in his tenderness, taken pity on his wretched state. He had offended an infinite majesty; and, of course, was incapable to make atonement for his crime; for which it was not in his power to offer an adequate satisfaction. But the Almighty, Theophilus, by a mercy as incomprehensible as his justice, came to his relief. The consolatory promise of a Saviour followed close upon man's offence: and God, even before he pronounced the sentence of condemnation on him, showed to Adam, under the figure of the malediction of the serpent, the salvation, he intended, both for him and his posterity. For, in cursing the serpent, that is to say, the devil, who had disguised himself under that appearance for the seduction of the woman, he declared that of her should be born one, who should crush the serpent's head; viz. by effectually subverting the power of that infernal spirit. And thus it was understood both by our first parents and their descendants.

But this promise was not fulfilled till four thousand years after. God thought proper, during this long interval, to unfold it by degrees, and to repeat it more distinctly. In fact, the promise God made to Adam, was afterwards confirmed by another given to Abraham, whom he destined to be the head of a people, peculiarly devoted to him. Go

forth, says the Lord to Abraham, *out of thy country, and come into the land which I shall show thee. I will make of thee a great nation,—and in thee shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed.\** These last words import that of the progeny of Abraham should be born the Saviour of the world: they show in what sense the first promise was to be taken; and how the offspring of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head. Idolatry and vice had overrun the whole world, when God promised to Abraham that, through him and his descendants, all nations should be delivered from the tyranny of the devil, and brought back to the knowledge of God,—the source of every blessing. We shall see, as we advance in the order of the prophecies, that such is the purport and meaning of these words. This promise was renewed to Isaac and to Jacob, in the very same terms; the latter of whom, inspired from above, still more clearly predicted the coming of the Redeemer, who had been promised from the beginning, and pointed out the time of his coming. For being on his death-bed; and foretelling, by the divine direction, to his children assembled around him, what would happen to their posterity in after ages, he addressed himself to Juda in these remarkable words: *Juda! thee shall thy brethren praise:—the sons of thy fathers shall bow down to thee. The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his family, till he come, that is to be sent, and he shall be the expectation of nations.†*

Remark, Theophilus, how light is gradually thrown on the promise, first made to Adam, and afterwards reiterated to Abraham. The object of this promise is here styled the *Messiah*, or the person sent by God, by way of distinction. He is expected by the Gentiles, who, through him, are to be blessed. His particular family begins to be known; and the time of his coming is clearly marked; viz. when the sceptre, or the pre-eminence of dominion, shall be removed from the house of Juda. In another chapter, I will show you the literal accomplishment of this prediction. At present, we will pursue the explanation of the promises. Three hundred years after the dissolution of Jacob, the Almighty, desiring to liberate his people from the servitude of the Egyptians, under which they had long groaned, raised up an extraordinary personage to whom he communicated a share of his

\* Gen. xii. 1—3.

† Gen. xlix. 8—10.

spirit and power. Moses, having given to this people a new law, inspired by the Deity, conducted them through the numberless difficulties to the entrance of the promised land. Perceiving his end draw near, he assembled the Israelites, and confirmed to them, on the part of God, the future coming of the Messiah, who should spring from the race of Juda. *The Lord, thy God*, he says, *will raise up to thee a prophet, of thy nation, and of thy brethren, like unto me; him thou shalt hear.\** Thus did God keep his people in the constant expectation of the Saviour, whom he had promised their forefathers. This prophet, like to Moses, the deliverer of his brethren, the promulgator of a new law, the mediator of a covenant hitherto unknown, in whose presence Moses himself is silent, and who alone is to be attended to, when once he begins to speak, is the Saviour of mankind, whose doctrine enlightens the world, and of whom God himself is pleased to say, *This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.* Till his arrival, there was not to be seen in Israel, a prophet like to Moses, with whom the Deity would condescend to converse face to face, and who should be the mediator of his people and the law-giver to his inheritance.

Deep, indeed, O God! was the wound, which sin had inflicted on our race. But however grievous our evils, thou art able to heal them: for no disorder is incurable to an omnipotent physician. If the effects of thy justice are inconceivable, those of thy mercy are not less incomprehensible. Thou requirest a compensation adequate to the offence; but thou art pleased thyself to supply us with the victim. Thou demandest the payment of an infinite debt; but thou puttest into our hands the means to discharge it. Thou didst console lost man with the hopes of a Saviour, who should deliver him from his misery, and effect his reconciliation. This conqueror of the devil, whom thou didst promise to Adam, thou didst announce to Abraham as the person who should pour out his blessings on all the tribes of the earth. This same thou didst show to Jacob, as the chosen Messiah, the object of the wishes and of the expectation of mankind. Thou didst cherish this fond hope, by representing him to Moses, as the mediator of a new alliance, whom thou commandest us to listen to. Yes, O Lord! we are docile to his voice. We make profession of believing in him, and of adhering to his

\* Deut. xviii. 15.

doctrine. We are, therefore, entitled to consider ourselves as truly the children of the promise. Thou didst assure Abraham that thou wouldst be his God, and the God of his people; and thou countest of his family all who imitate his faith. We then, are thy people, and heirs to the benediction that was to make the happiness of the Gentiles. We will ever celebrate thy mercy, which has deigned to prepare so efficacious a remedy for the cure of all the evils that sin has brought upon us.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we must firmly believe in the promises of God.

---

## CHAPTER XI.

### ON THE EXPLICATION ON THE PROMISES, AND THE FUTURE CONVERSION OF THE GENTILES.

*For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, whomsoever the Lord our God shall call. Acts ii. 39.*

God himself, my Theophilus, has disclosed the meaning of the promises which he made to the Patriarchs, and he has clearly informed us in what consisted that benediction, which the Messiah was to communicate to all the nations of the globe. With the single exception of the Israelites, the whole world was sunk in darkness and in the horrors of idolatry. God was totally forgotten; and the devil was every where honoured under different forms. An impiety so general, confirmed by a long succession of ages, and supported by the voice of passion, which it universally favoured, might seem almost incurable. But the Deity was determined to put an end to the rule of Satan, and to recall deluded man to the knowledge of the truth.

This revolution was to be the work of the Messiah; of whose illustrious character one of the most distinguished features was, that he should enlighten the people, whom he was



commissioned to bless. God deputed men, animated with his spirit, to announce, in his name, the future conversion of the Gentiles. This prophecy is expressed in the most clear and explicit terms, and frequently repeated in the pages of the Bible. All the prophets foresaw, and predicted this great event, ages before it happened; and at a time when it appeared incredible. By the direction of Heaven, they declared that the Messiah should dispel the mist, which, till his arrival, should cover the earth; that he should bring light to the Gentiles, whose deliverer he should be, as well as of the Jews; and that of both united he should form one only people, to be the worshippers and servants of the true and living God.

If you look into the sacred writings, you will be astonished to see in how many passages, and with what perspicuity and clearness this prediction is marked; a few of which only I can here single out. David, speaking of the consequences of the coming of the Messiah, says: *All the ends of the earth shall remember, and shall be converted to the Lord. All the kindreds of the Gentiles shall adore in his sight. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and he shall have dominion over the nations.\** Hear the prophet Isaiah. "Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, for a leader and a master to the Gentiles. Behold thou shalt call a nation, which thou knewest not: and the nations which knew not thee shall run to thee.† The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, and idols shall be utterly destroyed.‡ For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall walk in the light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising."§ Then addressing the Messiah; "I have taken thee by the hand, and preserved thee. And I have given thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles. That thou mightest open the eyes of the blind, and bring forth the prisoner out of prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.|| Behold I have given thee to be the light of the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation even to the farthest part of the earth."¶ In similar terms do they all uniformly express themselves.

According to their assertions then, the coming of the Messiah is to be productive of an event of the greatest impor-

\* T. xxi. 28. 29.

§ Is. lx. 2. 3.

† Is. lv. 4. 5.

|| Is. xlii. 6. 7.

‡ Is. ii. 17. 18.

¶ Is. lix. 6.

tance,—a signal revolution, which the whole universe shall witness. And what this is to be it is not possible to mistake. The Gentiles enlightened, and the world converted: idolatry destroyed, and the true God made known; such are the happy consequences of the arrival of the Messiah. Whence, all the nations of the earth shall be truly blessed in him: because the light which he diffuses, shall be to them a source of benediction and grace. I will show you by and by, no less evidently, that this great change took place at the coming of Jesus Christ; and that it was brought about by those, whom he employed for this purpose, and placed under the guidance of his Holy Spirit. This sole fact is a clear and satisfactory proof of the divine origin of that religion which he came to propagate on earth.

I plainly see, O my God, how the nations were to be blessed in the seed of Abraham. I perceive that thy Christ was to be the object of their wishes. For it was by him they were to emerge from that lamentable darkness, in which they had so long lain. He was to be their light and their salvation: to rescue them from the tyranny and oppression of Satan, and to obtain their peace and reconciliation with thee. And we ourselves, O Lord! were particularly concerned in thy promises; who, though our forefathers sat in darkness, have been gratuitously brought to thy admirable light. Permit us not, we beseech thee, to render ourselves unworthy of so signal a mercy. Make that sacred religion, which has been transmitted to us from thy Messiah, become daily more estimable. It bears such strong marks of the stamp of thy Divinity, that we must be blind not to be satisfied of its being thy work. An infinite wisdom alone could have foreseen, at so great a distance, the wondrous change that was to happen at the coming of thy anointed; and an infinite power solely could have produced such an alteration. I return thee my thanks, O God! for having made our holy religion so conspicuous and plain, that, unless we wilfully shut our eyes, we cannot but be struck by the rays of light that beam from it on every side.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should thank the Almighty for having called us to the true faith.

## CHAPTER XII.

ON THE MARKS OF THE MESSIAH, AS DESCRIBED BY THE  
PROPHETS.

*To him all the prophets give testimony. Acts x. 43.*

IN proportion as the time approached for the coming of the Messiah, the predictions relating to him became more clear and circumstantial. The Deity seemed wholly occupied with the prosecution of this grand object. He deputed prophets, from time to time, to announce his arrival; each of whom he directed to point him out by some particular feature, and such as might be proper to note and to make him known, at his appearance. They were as so many messengers, sent beforehand to keep alive the cherished hope. And God himself sketched the qualities, that were to be united in his Christ. By the organs of his ministers, he foretold the various circumstances attending his birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection. The history of the Messiah was already written and divulged, before he showed himself in person. And as the portrait, my dear Theophilus, cannot fail to be highly interesting to you, I will proceed to explain it, by a short detail of the leading prophecies, that regard this august subject.

David is one of those who, by the inspiration of the Almighty, speak most openly of the Messiah. He calls him his Lord, and owns him for the Son of God. He says that his empire shall extend over all the regions of the globe, and shall know no other limits than those of the universe itself. He foretells his cruel death, and the very torments he should be made to suffer. He sees his hands and feet bored, his mangled flesh and disjointed bones; his divided garments, and contested robe; his parched palate, moistened with gall and vinegar, and the universal misery of his agonizing moments. And, at the same time, he assures us that he shall not experience corruption; but shall rise triumphant and victorious from the trammels of the grave. A prophecy so much the more wonderful, as it was made above a thousand years before its ultimate completion.

Isaias, who lived three hundred years later, describes the

Messiah with equal perspicuity. He sees him spring from the root of Jesse, and have a virgin for his mother. He styles him *the admirable child, the father of future ages, the prince of peace*, and finally God.\* His reign is to be eternal, and all nations shall adore him. At his command, the lame shall walk, the deaf shall hear, the dumb shall speak, and the blind shall see. But the same Isaiah, after relating the glory of the Messiah, relates also his humiliations. He represents him as disregarded, contemned and deemed unworthy of notice: as the outcast of mankind, a man of sorrows, and loaded with infirmities, in consequence of his having charged himself with the expiation of our crimes. He shall be spit upon, treated as a criminal, and with such sinners led to death; and all this he shall submit to as peaceably and as meekly, as a lamb to the butcher's knife. The Prophet adds that, by his death, he shall become the head of a numerous posterity, viz. his Church, to which the Gentiles shall be called; while the Jews, with the exception of a few of them, shall be rejected and set aside, for their obstinate incredulity. Can any thing but the Gospel itself be more explicit? And yet this prediction was made full seven hundred years before the coming of our Saviour.

The other prophets saw no less distinctly the mystery of the Messiah. Micheas foretells that Bethlehem, the smallest of the towns of Juda, shall be ennobled by his birth. Zachary sees him sold by a faithless disciple for thirty pieces of silver: he sees even the potter's field, on which the money shall be laid out, when returned by the traitor. The same prophet describes him as a king, though humble and poor, and riding on an ass,—the highest pitch of grandeur he ever affected, and which he only assumed on his entrance into Jerusalem: whilst Aggeus proclaims the glory of the second temple, which the Messiah, the desired of nations, is to honour with his presence.

The prophet Daniel determines the period and precise epoch of his coming. For, while intent upon considering the captivity of his people, and the seventy years of its duration; on a sudden, the Spirit of God raised him to things more elevated and important. He foretells, after seventy weeks of years, that is, after a space of four hundred and ninety years, the end of another captivity, far more oppressive, from which

\* Is. ix. 6.

mankind shall be delivered by the death of the Messiah: a deliverance, that consists in the abolition of sin, and the bringing of the everlasting reign of justice. He informs us that, in the last of these weeks, Christ shall be put to death, a new covenant established, and the ancient sacrifices abolished. After the death of God's anointed, shall come the extremity of misery: the holy city shall be laid waste, the people who rejected him, cast off, and the abomination of desolation shall fix its residence in the very temple. In fine, Malachy, the last of the prophets, tells us that, in lieu of the ancient sacrifices, shall be substituted a pure oblation, which shall be presented to the Lord, not only in Jerusalem, which had hitherto exclusively enjoyed the privilege; but in every place, from the rising to the setting of the sun; and this no longer by the Jews, who had once been the chosen inheritance; but by the uncircumcised Gentiles, among whom the name of the Lord shall, in future, be great.

And observe; my dear child, that the authenticity of these prophecies admits of no doubt: they are acknowledged by a people, whose testimony is unquestionable,—the Jews, the declared enemies of the Christian name; who, although these predictions are replete with their condemnation, still respect them. The books, from which they are taken, are in the hands of our adversaries, from whom we have received them, and who cannot be suspected of being partial to our pretensions.

Such, O God! are the wonders thou didst disclose by the prophets, many centuries beforehand, by which thou didst gradually unfold this mystery, by the most distinct predictions. To confirm my faith, I will here bring into one point these different prophecies. The Messiah, shown at a distance as the descendant of Abraham, is again, on a nearer view, acknowledged for the son of David. The time of his coming is marked out with the utmost precision. He shall be born of a virgin, and that in Bethlehem. He shall be a king, though poor and very unlike to an earthly one. He shall enter Jerusalem, in a kind of triumph, mounted on an ass. He is God, and the second temple shall receive him. He shall work many miracles, and all of them in favour of the wretched and distressed. He shall publish a new law, and establish another covenant; but his people shall not own him. He shall be sold for thirty pieces of silver; and the money shall be employed in purchasing a potter's field. He shall be

treated with the greatest indignity; and shall have his hands and feet bored. His garments shall be divided; and his robe drawn for by lot. By his death, sin shall be effaced, and iniquity abolished; whilst he himself, its conqueror, shall rise triumphant from the grave. In punishment of this crime, Jerusalem shall be destroyed, its inhabitants dispersed, and its sacrifices annulled; the Gentiles shall be converted, and all nations shall worship him. By him, thy name, Q Lord! shall be rendered great throughout the universe; and a pure, and unsullied victim shall every where be offered to thee.

How admirable this detail, when we consider its precision and the distance of time, at which it was distinctly foretold. Who, but thyself, could thus have pierced into futurity, and discovered events so remote, with such minuteness and accuracy? O my God! I adore thy all-wise counsels, in which every thing is connected; and which have thus dictated beforehand the history of the Messiah, the Saviour of mankind, to serve as a constant proof of the truth of that religion, which, by thy mercy, we profess.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must adhere cordially to our religion, which is as ancient as the world.

---

## CHAPTER XIII.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE MESSIAH, THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

*These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. John xx. 31.*

You are now acquainted, Theophilus, with all the principal features, by which the prophets, from the beginning, marked out the Messiah. If these features resemble and accord with Jesus Christ; and cannot, upon the whole, be applied with propriety to any one but him, is it not clear that he is the Messiah, the Saviour promised to Adam, the descendant of Abraham, in whom all nations were to be blessed,—

the Son of David, whose reign, as foretold, should be eternal? You shall now no less evidently find, that Jesus Christ, our Lord, united in his person all the marks above mentioned. You shall see that the description of the Messiah, delineated by the Prophets, is the picture of Jesus Christ,—a picture so exact and so faithful, that he cannot but be known by it. To be convinced of which, we need only compare the predictions with the events; holding in one hand the Old, and in the other, the New Testament, as we will now do together.

In the first place, then, it is certain that at the time of the birth of Christ, there was an expectation of the Messiah spread generally not only in Judea, but through all the countries of the East. And this fact is attested by the heathens themselves. "It was an opinion," says Suetonius, "which had long prevailed in the East, that, at that period, there should come those from Judea, who should obtain universal empire." Tacitus tells us the same thing. "Many," he says, "were persuaded, that, at that time, Judea should give birth to them that should be masters of the world." This general expectancy was founded on the well known prophecy of Jacob, which foretold the Messiah should come, when the Jews should cease to be governed by the family of Juda: and again upon that of Daniel, which fixed the arrival of the Messiah at the epoch of four hundred and ninety years. And accordingly, Christ was born at the time, when Judea was subject to the dominion of Herod, a foreigner; and at the close of the seventy weeks of years, as computed by Daniel.

The prophecies announce that the Messiah should be a descendant of the progeny of David; that he should have a virgin for his mother, and be born of her at Bethlehem. Open now the Gospel. You will there see that Jesus was born of a virgin, of the family of David, and in the little town of Bethlehem; though it was not her usual residence; but, by a particular disposition of divine Providence, she and Joseph were obliged to repair thither, to register their names and place of their nativity. According to Moses, the Messiah was to be the author of a new law, of greater perfection than the first, and to establish a new covenant. This law, my child, you know: of this covenant you are a member. Isaiah says the Messiah should confirm his doctrine by restoring sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the use of their limbs to the cripple, and life to the dead. Compare this description with the words, addressed by our Saviour to the disciples of St. John, to show

that he was truly the Christ: *Go and relate to John, what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, and the dead arise.\**

Recollect what the prophets foretold of the triumphant entrance of the Messiah into Jerusalem and its temple; of the treachery of one of his disciples; of the reward of that treachery; of the use to be made of the money; of the vile treatment he should experience; of the torments he should endure; of his ignominious and cruel death; and lastly, of the result and fatal issue of it. Then peruse the recital, which the Evangelists give, of the passion of Jesus Christ; and tell me if it be possible to conceive a more exact conformity between the predictions and their events. Christ made his entrance into Jerusalem amidst the acclamations of the people: and his triumph was accompanied with the peculiar circumstance, foreshown by Zachary, of his being mounted, not on a splendid car, like the monarchs of the earth, but on an humble ass, attended by its foal. He went often into the temple, and taught there publicly, and foretold its destruction; to show that the prophecy was fulfilled, and that no other Messiah was, in future, to be looked for. He was sold for thirty pieces of coin, and the money was expended in the purchase of a potter's field. He was loaded with insults, associated with malefactors, fastened to a cross with nails, that pierced his hands and feet; while the soldiers, that crucified him, divided his clothes among them, and cast lots for his unseamed robe. He continued an inhabitant of the grave for only three days, and then raised himself from it with unparalleled glory.

Who, with marks so distinct, can mistake the Messiah, described by the prophets? But let us finish the likeness, and compare the consequences of his death with the predictions concerning it. It was foretold that, on the murder of the Messiah, and in punishment of it, the holy city should be subverted, with its temple and altars, and that utter desolation should quickly succeed. Of the completion of this prophecy you may soon be convinced. Look into the history of the Jews, written by Josephus, one of their principal men. You will there find that, in a very short space from the death of Jesus Christ, Jerusalem was taken and razed by the Romans, the temple laid in ashes, and Judea laid waste. Eleven hundred thousand Israelites perished miserably in this war:

\* Luke vii. 22.



the remains of that unhappy people were dispersed over the globe: and this desolation still continues, at the distance of eighteen centuries. We see the Jewish race universally proscribed, without a temple, without a government, without a country, and every where bearing about them the visible tokens of Divine vengeance.

Finally, it is foretold that, by the coming of the Messiah, those who till then had been seated in the darkness of idolatry, should be enlightened from above, and converted to the Lord; that the name of God should become great among them; that there should be one people and one Church, of which Christ should be the head; and that in all places an unspotted victim should be offered to the Deity. As to this point, we have but to open our eyes, and to contemplate, without prejudice, the present state of the universe, to be convinced that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah. Behold the Christian church, composed of various nations, which were formerly idolatrous. See the homage now paid to the one only God, where incense was burnt to a plurality of fancied Deities. 'And who, but Jesus Christ, has removed the veil from their eyes? Was it not he, who sent disciples to illuminate the earth, to make known the true God, and to trample on the idols?

Wherefore, from all here said it is manifest that Jesus Christ is the Messiah; since there is not a single prediction concerning the latter, but what is evidently verified in the person of the former. Christ was born at the time, in the place, and in the manner it was foretold the Messiah should be. He lived, and died, as the Messiah was to live and die. Jerusalem destroyed, the temple consumed, the ancient mode of worship abrogated, the Jews expelled from their country, and still wandering for eighteen hundred years,—all these things concur, together with the conversion of the world, to evince beyond a doubt that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, is the Messiah, promised to the Patriarchs, and announced by the prophets.

This ineffable mystery after which the ancient Saints so long sighed, is then, O God! accomplished. The Saviour promised to our first parents, who was to overturn the dominion of Satan; the desired of nations, who was to bring benediction and light to all mankind; the legislator, who was to be the author of a holy covenant between thee and man; the Prince of peace, who was to conciliate a guilty world with offended Heaven,—is come, at length, and stands revealed to our eyes. What a

consolation for us, O Lord! to find in thy prophets so clear a prediction of what thy Evangelists tell us; and to see in their writings, so distinctly pointed out *The Lamb, who taketh away the sins of the world*, and washes our polluted souls in his blood. No; it is not possible to be deceived in the person of him, whom thou hast delineated with an accuracy so faithful and so striking. At his adorable name, let, then, every knee bend, and may the universe unite in his worship and service.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must testify our respect, whenever we hear the sacred name of Jesus.

---

## CHAPTER XIV.

### ON THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION.

*A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son; and his name shall be called Emmanuel.* Isaias vii. 14.

THE Messiah, Theophilus, whom at present you know to be our Lord, Jesus Christ, had titles and qualities assigned him by the prophets, that could apply to none but God. Isaias had even styled him so, and had named him *Emmanuel* which signifies *God with us*; inasmuch as he was to be born, and to live in the midst of us. It is the Son of God, therefore, the second person of the blessed Trinity, who became man for our redemption. This truth, which the Gospel expresses still more clearly, is called the mystery of the incarnation. I will now lay before you what faith teaches of it.

The only Son of God, the Word, existing from all eternity in the glory of the Father, deigned to humble himself so low, as to assume a body and a soul, like to those of us poor mortals. It was not the Father, who became man, nor the Holy Ghost. It was the Son, the second person of the sacred Trinity. His body was formed, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, out of the substance of the pious Mary; who conceived

and brought him into the world, remaining at the same time a pure and spotless virgin. Every thing regarding the conception and birth of Christ is divine, and superior to nature. The spirit of God, who effected this Miracle, renders Mary fruitful, without impairing her integrity. The manner, by which so great a mystery was accomplished, is incomprehensible and ineffable. But the following is the relation, which the Gospel gives us of it.

When the time pre-ordained by Heaven, was arrived, an Angel was deputed to communicate to Mary that she was about to become a mother, without ceasing to be a virgin; and that the child, which was to be born of her, should be the Son of the Most High, and produced by the power of the Holy Ghost. The blessed virgin believed, and assented to the word of the heavenly messenger. Immediately, the mystery of the incarnation was accomplished. The sacred Spirit formed within her the body of Jesus Christ; to this body was united a soul: and at that moment was established an indissoluble union between the divine and human nature, in the person of the Son of God. Thus, the only begotten of the Father became man, without ceasing to be God. Jesus Christ was at once both perfect God and man: and the blessed Mary was mother of God, in the plain and obvious sense. For she conceived a God incarnate; whom, after the usual length of time, she brought into the world; still remaining as before, an immaculate virgin.

You see by this account, Theophilus, that Jesus Christ, as man, acknowledges no father: though, to conceal this mystery, under the cover of becoming decency, the Almighty was pleased that Mary should be previously married to Joseph. But as God, he has a Father, who had begotten him from all eternity; and to whom he is equal in every perfection. In Christ there are two natures, distinct and unmixed; that of the Divinity, by which he is God, the same as his Father; and that of our humanity, by which he is man, similar to ourselves. Nevertheless, there is but one sole person in him, viz: the person of the Son of God. However inconceivable this mystery, we do not hesitate to believe it, because revealed by him, who is the fountain of truth.

In yourself you find an image of it, which, although but imperfect, may contribute to assist your faith. Your soul, which is a nature wholly spiritual and immortal, is joined to a body, which, being composed of matter, is liable to decay.

The union of these two substances, so essentially different, constitute one only man; who is at once body and soul, corruptible and incorruptible, brute matter and intellectual spirit. In like manner, the divinity of the Word and the nature of man united, without being confounded, form one sole Jesus Christ, true God and true man; begotten from eternity by the Father, and born in time of the virgin; as God, omnipotent; and as man, clothed with weakness. For, sin alone excepted and its inseparable consequences, such as ignorance and concupiscence, Christ was subject to all our miseries; with this only difference that, whereas, we are bound to experience them in defiance of ourselves, in him they were the effect of his own free choice. But we are not to suppose the divine nature was altered by the mystery of the incarnation. God, without ceasing to be what he essentially is, vouchsafed to unite our nature to his own. Nor did he demean himself by so doing. The humiliations and infirmities, to which he became thereby exposed, regard only his humanity. In Jesus Christ, the merits are those of a God, while the sufferings are those of man.

O Word incarnate! I adore thee. I believe thee to be truly both God and man in one; begotten by thy Father, before the existence of ages; and born, in time, of the substance of a virgin. As God, thou art equal to thy Father, and as man, like to us. Though both God and man, thou art still but one Christ. Though possessed of two natures, there is but one sole person in thee, the person of the Son of God. Such is the faith in which I was baptized; and in which, by thy grace, I mean to live and die. I give my fullest assent to this ineffable mystery, however superior to the weakness of my reason. I believe it, my God! though I do not comprehend it; and consider it, for this very reason, as still more worthy of thee. Never suffer me to be so ungrateful as to question thy goodness, merely because it exceeds the reach of my comprehension. And after all, I see nothing in this mystery but the adorable effect of an infinite mercy: and so far is my faith from wavering, at the view of an immense and inconceivable love to man, that I more humbly acknowledge my God under the veil of infirmity.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That it is our duty to nourish a most grateful remembrance of the mystery of the incarnation.

## CHAPTER XV.

A CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

*Mercy and truth have met, justice and peace have kissed.*  
Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

ABOVE all things, my dear child, remember that, for our sake only, the Son of God became incarnate: to free us from the servitude of sin, and from the punishment of hell; and to merit for us life eternal, to which our claim was justly forfeited. We had offended God; and this offence was infinite; because it attacked an infinite Majesty. The justice of the Deity required an atonement, and an atonement adequate to the grievousness of the insult. But as an infinite satisfaction surpassed the narrow powers of a mere limited mortal, an incarnate God was solely competent to make reparation to the divine justice. It was requisite he should be man, to be capable of suffering; and besides, as it was man that had sinned; it became incumbent on man to atone for the crime. It was also requisite that he should be God, to confer a merit of infinite value on the sufferings of man.

By the mystery of the incarnation, the same person is both God and man in one. "The Word was made flesh,"\* to redeem us from sin: he clothed himself with our miseries, to liberate us from them. By this admirable plan, the crime is punished, while the criminal is saved. Thus justice and mercy are conciliated in him. The injury done to God is abundantly repaired, and the Deity is honoured in the manner he is entitled to. Christ has become our mediator: and a most perfect one he is; allied to God, by his divine, and to us, by his human nature, who can suffer, as we do, because he has a nature like to ours; and by his sufferings, can reconcile us to his Father, because he is, in all respects, equal to him; a mediator, in fine, who, through his infinite sanctity, is wholly acceptable to him, with whom he has undertaken to conciliate the offender.

Perhaps a comparison may be of service to illustrate this matter to you. Had a king been insulted by one of the infe-

\* John i. 14.

rior class of people, neither the party offending, nor any other subject could make an adequate reparation for the affront, offered to him. Whatever the guilty person could do, would fall very far short of the atrociousness of the injury. But, if the son of the same king, the heir to his crown and the actual partner of his royalty, touched with compassion for the wretch, should descend from his throne, throw off his regal robes, and, attired in rags, should prostrate himself before his father, implore his forgiveness, and submit to any punishment, that might be deemed adequate to the offence: such a satisfaction you may conceive would be proportionate to the dignity of insulted majesty; the injury would be repaired, and the monarch, in his clemency, without disparaging his justice, might show mercy to the criminal. This is, however, a faint image of the favour obtained for man, by the incarnation of the Son of God.

How wonderful is the Almighty in all his operations, and more especially in this incomprehensible exertion of his infinite love! What a mercy, to have given us his only Son for a Redeemer! How deeply indebted are we to this generous Saviour, who has humbled himself so far as to lay aside his glory, to clothe himself with our nature, to assume our infirmities, and to become like to ourselves, in every thing but sin. Learn to reverence the humiliations of this incarnate God. He is no less worthy of your homage in the stable of Bethlehem, under the swaddling clothes, with which he is there bound, than in heaven, on the throne, on which he is now seated in glory. Despise not the lowly state to which he has descended for your sake, and which constitutes your honour and the firmness of your strength. Had he not become what you are, you never would have been the child of God, the heir of heaven. He saved that nature only, which he assumed: and he assumed it entirely, that he might save you completely, both as to body and soul.

For us, then, O God! thou wast made man. At a time, when, as sinners, we were most undeserving of thy love, thou didst annihilate thyself for us. The satisfaction which thou didst offer, is proportioned to the offence, and the crime is fully expiated. Thou hast reconciled the claims of thy justice with the calls of thy mercy. We were unable to soar up the elevated heights of the Divinity above; but, by condescending to dwell among us, thou hast deigned to stoop to us, that thou mightest raise us up to thee. Our life was forfeited

by sin; but, by assuming our nature, thou hast mercifully restored it to us. We are become the children of God, by thy becoming the Son of man. I know, my adored Saviour! that thou lovest in a godlike manner, that is, without restriction or bounds. May this excess of love produce its due effect upon my heart. May I love thee, as thou hast loved me; and may I devote myself to thee without division or reserve.

*The Practical Inference.*

That Jesus Christ must be the object of our warmest affections.

---

## CHAPTER XVI.

### ON THE PUBLIC LIFE OF CHRIST: HIS MIRACLES.

*They presented to him all the sick, that were taken with divers diseases; and he healed them. Matt. iv. 24.*

You acknowledge the voice of God, Theophilus, when it speaks to you by the prophecies, which are so clear, so circumstantial and so minutely fulfilled. And in fact, God alone could have foreseen such distant events, and have marked their accomplishment with so much precision and certainty. But there is also another way, that God makes use of, to discover his will to men, viz. that of miracles.

Were you to see a man giving laws to nature, walking on the waters, restoring sight to the blind, raising the dead to life, you would, doubtless, believe that he was the messenger of the Deity: for you are sensible such works as these exceed the power of man, and that God alone can interrupt the ordinary course of nature. Our Redeemer proved the divinity of his mission, by the evidence we now speak of, as well as by that of the prophecies. For, to show that he was the Messiah, he wrought many miracles, as the Gospel informs us. He changed water into wine; gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and the use of their limbs to the paralytic. The

most inveterate disorders he cured in an instant; often by a single word, and sometimes without approaching, or even seeing those whom he relieved. He commanded the winds and sea, and stilled their violence, by a word. Twice, in the desert he multiplied a few loaves so as to feed an immense crowd with them. Even death was obedient to him, and returned, at his command, those whom it already had seized. He became invisible at pleasure. He knew the most hidden thoughts of such as he conversed with. He laid open the secrets of futurity. He was transfigured on Mount Thabor, and there gave to his apostles a glimpse of his heavenly splendour.

And observe, Theophilus, that all the miracles of our Saviour were useful to men, and conducive to their welfare; the proofs of his benevolence no less than of his power. Nor had ostentation the smallest share in them: In vain did the Pharisees request of him a sign from heaven. In vain did Herod long to see some exertion of his power. But, though he would never work a prodigy to gratify their curiosity, he relieved, without hesitation, all the infirm that applied to him.

Observe likewise that the reality of his miracles is undoubted and incontestable. He performed them not in secret, nor in places hidden and concealed; but in the open streets, before all the people, and in places of public resort, such as the temple, &c. The resurrection of Lazarus was effected at Bethania, in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and in the presence of many witnesses. The cure of the person who, for thirty-eight years, had been struck with a palsy, and that of the man, who had been blind from his birth, took place in the heart of the metropolis. The last mentioned of these miracles made a great noise in that city. The heads of the Synagogue, being much alarmed by it, interrogated very strictly both the man and his parents. But all their inquiries only confirmed the truth of the miracle, and added to its celebrity. If our Saviour performs any wonders in the desert, it is still in the presence of a vast concourse of people. But the greater part of his miracles he did before the eyes of the Pharisees and of the Doctors of the law; who, being his professed enemies, were perfectly disposed to call whatever he did in question. The evidence of these miracles was, however, so forcible, as to confound their malice; and even to extort from them a formal acknowledgment. "What do we," said they, "this man doth many miracles; if we let him alone, so all



will believe in him,"\* and it was this that decided them to put him to death.

Moreover, these miracles were afterwards attested by ocular witnesses, who sealed their evidence with their blood. In their narration of these facts, candour and sincerity are throughout conspicuous. Read the account they give of them, and you will see an air of truth, that imposture cannot mimic. They called on the Jews themselves, to witness what they related; and no one dared to contradict them. Numbers even of the Jews were converted by these miracles, being compelled to acknowledge that God only could operate them. "We know," said Nicodemus, "that thou art come a teacher from God; for no man can do these signs which thou dost, unless God be with him."†

To conclude, then, my dear child, the miracles of Christ were sufficiently numerous, and clear enough to show that he was truly the Messiah. And, indeed, the people struck with admiration at such wonderful works, as none of the preceding prophets had, at any time equalled,—confessed him so to be. "This," they exclaimed, "is of a truth the prophet, that is to come into the world:‡ a great prophet is risen up among us, and God hath visited his people."§ Nor did our divine Saviour rest satisfied with performing miracles himself: he also conferred upon his disciples the power of working them. "Heal the sick," he said to them, "raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out devils."|| And in fact, in the course of their mission, the Apostles performed these signal prodigies. By their means, they effected the conversion of the world; which will ever continue a permanent proof of the miracles, wrought by them. For without those visible marks of the Divine interposition, the universe would still be sunk in the darkness of idolatry.

Thou hast established the Christian faith, O God, on immoveable foundations. Thou hast afforded her, for her security, two different proofs; each of them so simple, as to come within the reach of the meanest capacity; and, at the same time, so evident, as to bring conviction to the most enlightened: proofs manifestly stamped with the marks of thy power; and which neither the efforts of man, nor the delusions of the devil can imitate or falsify. These proofs are the

\* John xi. 47, 48.

† John iii. 2.

‡ John vi. 14.

§ Luke vii. 16.

|| Math. x. 8.

prophecies, delivered by thy truth; and miracles, the effects of thy infinite power. Thou hast raised up inspired persons, who, many ages beforehand, might predict with an entire certitude what the human mind could never foresee. And such is the evidence and minuteness of these predictions, as to surpass all admiration. To this proof thou hast added that of miracles: of miracles the most public, and multiplied in an infinity of shapes. These are most striking facts, that the most ignorant cannot mistake; and of which thousands are not only the witnesses, but the objects; bearing in their own persons the visible effects of their favourable influence. What more can be wanting to the most full conviction, to the firmest belief? For who, O Lord! but thyself, can, with a single word appease the winds, make the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the dead to rise? With what a dignified and divine authority didst thou command obsequious nature? Thou commandest the sea to be still, and instantly it was calmed; the winds, and the winds were silent: *Arise, girl: Young man, arise: Lazarus, come forth.* It was thus thou didst speak to death; and trembling death obeyed thee. When I hear this tone of authority, can I mistake the voice of the Almighty, the absolute Master of the creation?

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should endeavour to call to mind some of the miracles of our Redeemer, whenever any suggestion against faith obtrudes itself upon us.

---

## CHAPTER XVII.

### ON THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

*And they wondered at the words of grace, that proceeded from his mouth. Luke iv. 22, 23.*

THE doctrine of Jesus Christ is that, my dear Theophilus, which is delivered to you in the catechisms and at public

instructions. And how admirable is it! How worthy of the Deity! How proportioned to our necessities! In comparison with it, all human sciences are nothing.

By this sacred doctrine, we obtain a knowledge of God, and of our duties towards him. It teaches us what we are, and acquaints us with our obligations to our fellow creatures. How sublime the mysteries, which are the object of our faith! Never could human reason have imagined any thing similar. No. None but our Lord himself could have revealed such august truths. It is from him we have learned that there are three persons in the Deity, and that these three persons are still but one God. It is by him we are informed that he is himself, at once, the Son of God, and the Son of man; and, of consequence, both God and man together. Whence appears also the love which God bears us; since he has even given his only Son, to effect our salvation.

How conspicuous the sanctity that pervades the rules of conduct, which he prescribes in his moral precepts. Let us here briefly view them. God alone is to be feared, he says "Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul into hell."\* God is to be loved above all things. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy mind, and with thy whole strength."† We must repose our whole confidence in God. "Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat; nor for your body, what you shall put on. Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap. Consider the lilies of the field:—not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these."‡ It is our duty to serve God alone, and to devote all our actions to him. "No man can serve two masters.—Do not your justice before men, to be seen by them."§ For if you do, you will receive no reward from your Father, who is in heaven. Christ commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves; and, under this name of neighbour, he comprehends all mankind, not excepting even our enemies. "Do good to those that hate you; pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven, who makes his sun to rise upon the good and bad."|| He orders us to forgive our neighbour

\* Math. x. 28.

† Math. xxii. 32.

‡ Math. vi. 25, etc.

§ Math. vi. 1.

|| Math. v. 44, 45.

whatever offence he may have committed against us. He forbids us to be angry with our neighbour; and threatens with hell-fire all injurious and reproachful speeches. He prohibits all rash and unfounded judgments. "Judge not, that you may not be judged; for with what measure, you mete, it shall be measured to you again."\* He enjoins us to resist our passions, and condemns not only those exterior actions, which the indulgence of them might lead us to, but the harbouring any desires or even thoughts of what is evil. A legislator, who brings with him such a code of laws, can come only from heaven.

You see then, my child, that the doctrine of Jesus Christ prohibits all vice, and inculcates every virtue. It is wholly calculated to make us happy, were we but faithful in the practice of it. To this doctrine, in itself so amiable, our Saviour adds the most forcible motives, and such as are the best suited to make a deep impression on us. He tells us that this short and transitory life, which we drag on here on earth, shall be followed by an eternal life, in which the Deity will superabundantly reward them that shall have been obedient to his commands; and will punish with the greatest severity all such as shall have violated them. For this reason, he declares those to be happy, who renounce the enjoyments of this life, to secure themselves a place in the blissful regions of the next. And upon the same grounds, he proclaims them to be wretched, who seek their happiness here below: "For what," he says, "will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul,"† for an unbounded eternity?

How admirable, O God, is thy holy law! How sublime its dictates! How pure its morality, and how much elevated above our corruption! Such a doctrine can come from thee alone, O Lord! The more it is examined, the more clearly do the equity and wisdom of it appear. It remedies all our evils; it heals all our disorders; it shows us in what our happiness consists, and marks the road to it. How happy, O God! are they, who conform their conduct to its maxims! All their passions being kept in subjection, each virtue strikes deep its root, and produces in their hearts the fruits of a delicious peace. The hope of eternal felicity fills them with a sweet and serene joy. The pleasures of which they partake, leave

\* Math. vii. 1, 2.

† Mark. viii. 36.

no remorse behind them: the evils they experience, lose their acrimony and sting, when tempered by the unction of thy consoling grace. Not such, O Lord! are the effect of the doctrine of the impious. Emissaries of Satan, they speak only the deceitful language of vice and the passions; and their maxims produce nothing but distress of mind. But thy word is truth itself; which, while it enlightens the understanding, brings consolation to the heart. The principles of the wicked shall perish with them: but thy law shall continue for ever. Give me the grace, O my Sovereign Good! to meditate on it incessantly, to love it, and above all to practise it with diligence and fidelity.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should prefer the knowledge of religion to every other science.

---

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### ON THE VIRTUES OF CHRIST.

*Which of you shall convince me of sin?* John viii. 46.

THE doctrine, which Christ delivered, he himself was pleased to practise in the most sovereign degree of perfection; and his whole life was one continued and exact observance of it. The more, my dear child, you consider the actions of your Redeemer, the more you will admire the sanctity, which shines so eminently throughout his conduct. He was pleased to pass through the stage of infancy, to set you an example of those virtues, that are suitable to your age. You ought, therefore, to take him for your model, and strive to imitate him in that state.

He increased in grace and wisdom, in proportion as he advanced in years: that is, he unfolded gradually to the eyes of men that wisdom, the fulness of which he possessed, from the first moment of his conception; as the sun appears more brilliant, the nearer he approaches to his mid-career. The

Gospel informs us that Christ was subject to the orders of his parents. This docility includes all the virtues required in a child. For the child that is submissive, is obedient to the commands, and attentive to the instructions of all that have power over him: and by behaviour, he makes progress both in science and in virtue. Jesus Christ most assuredly did not want this assistance. He was not a common child, who needs a prop to support his weakness, or a master to inform his ignorance. He, who suffered himself to be thus conducted, was the eternal wisdom itself. He, who submitted voluntarily to his creatures, was the sovereign Lord of the universe. And all this to give you an example; to teach you to obey your parents, and to be submissive to them, that have the care of your education.

Jesus Christ persevered thus humbly in the exercise of all the milder virtues, till the age of thirty, when he began his public ministry. Then, at once, broke out the lustre of the most sublime character. His meekness was beyond expression. He forbade none to approach him; not even the most notorious and public sinners. On the contrary, he received them with kindness; he made no difficulty of eating with them; and, when reproached for his condescension, he replied: "I am come not to call the just, but sinners. They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill."\* He gives a description of himself, under the figure of a good Father, who runs to meet his ungrateful son, and casts himself on his neck; bathing him with his tears, and yielding to the transports, with which his happy return inspires him. This parable I could wish you to peruse; which you cannot do without feeling yourself moved. He expressed much pleasure on having little children presented to him; he blessed them, and said to his disciples, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."†

Meekness is, throughout, the leading feature of his character; and a meekness, which charms, and at the same time, inspires confidence. But this did not prevent him from severely reprimanding hardened sinners; and particularly the Pharisees, whom he pointedly reproached with their hypocrisy and pride. He showed invincible patience under all kinds of afflictions. Follow him, my Theophilus, from his cradle.

\* Math ix. 12, 13.

† Mark x. 14.

to his cross; and you will every where find him mourning, labouring, suffering. He endured hunger, thirst, fatigue and all the inconveniences of poverty. He would have nothing as his own. He had not even a place to repose his head in. He lived on what was given him by those, that attended on his sermons. He bore without complaint the pressure of the crowds, that often incommoded him; the importunities of the sick, that on every side assailed him. Amidst the many insults that were offered him, never did he attempt to defend or revenge himself.

But it was chiefly under the various circumstances of his passion, that he manifested a patience, altogether divine. You know what he endured, and what a series of unheard of torments, he was pleased to undergo. Yet he suffered neither complaint, reproach, nor menace to escape him; and, when nailed to the cross, he even prayed for his executioners. And take notice, that it depended upon himself to avoid all these sufferings. With a single word he overturned those, that came to seize upon his person: so that, if he submitted to such a cruel death, it was not for want of power to avert, but because he voluntarily chose it.

The whole life of Jesus Christ was one continued exercise of the most astonishing humility. He was born of indigent parents; he passed thirty years in obscurity; and when he pleased to manifest himself to the public, he did it in a manner so repugnant to the ideas of worldly state and grandeur, as to give the fullest conviction of their emptiness and insignificance. He never sought his own glory. He forbade his miracles to be mentioned: and when the people, whom he had fed by an exertion of his power, were for making him their king, he retired privately to a mountain, to avoid their well-meant, but mistaken importunity. Such was his disengagement from riches, that he loved poverty; such his disengagement from honours, that he sought humiliations; such his disengagement from pleasures, that he longed for sufferings. With reason then did he reproach the Jews with their resistance to his sacred mission; for a sanctity so extraordinary, evinced, beyond a doubt, that it was derived from God, the teacher of their forefathers. And such, in an inferior degree, is the character of those, whom the Almighty still chooses for his ministers to men. Their pure and untainted morals, their virtues, inaccessible to human passions, form a proof in their favour, that justly claims attention. Those, that are sincere and well-disposed, receive them without hesitation.

for they cannot but acknowledge the word of the Almighty, when they hear it from the lips of innocence and virtue.

O my Saviour! thou art the model of holiness. Thou hast set us an example of every virtue; and, to be perfect, we need but study and imitate thy actions. Thy whole life was one instruction for the regulation of ours; nor do we sin, but when we deviate from thy conduct and example. Although rich, thou wouldst be born poor, to teach us to condemn worldly opulence and wealth. From the glory of thy Father thou didst descend to humiliations, to cure our pride. Being sovereignly happy, thou submittest to sufferings, to detach our affections from the pleasures of the earth. Thou hast told us, O God! that we must imitate thee: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so do you also."\* And to them only hast thou promised a place in the mansions of thy glory, who, on earth, shall endeavour to become similar to thee. By thy example, therefore, we must learn to despise the honours, the riches, and the pleasures of this transitory life.—Grant us, O Lord! the grace of entering into thy dispositions, and of adopting the like sentiments. Teach us to judge of things as thou didst, that we may neither love, esteem, nor desire any thing in this world, but what thou hast first loved, esteemed and desired; that while we make profession of following thee, we may do it in effect, by the imitation of thy virtues.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must unite all our actions with those of Jesus Christ.

---

## CHAPTER XIX.

### ON THE MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION.

*Pilate delivered up Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. Mark. xv. 15.*

THE super-eminent sanctity of Jesus Christ, the purity of his doctrine and the lustre of his miracles, instead of gaining

\* John xvi. 15.



the Pharisees and the rulers of the Jewish people, only inflamed their envy, and inspired them with the design of putting him to death. For this purpose, they bribed Judas, one of his disciples, with thirty pieces of silver. The history of our Saviour's passion you may, perhaps, have read. But, to excite your piety, it will not be improper to recall to your memory the principal circumstances of that tragical event.

Our Redeemer, then, was loaded with insults, with calumnies and with curses. He was spit upon, and buffeted. He was esteemed less worthy than a notorious criminal. He was abandoned to a cruel flagellation; and, when covered with wounds and blood, was delivered up to a barbarous soldiery, who put a crown of thorns upon his head, and treated him with every indignity that scorn could suggest. The people who had always experienced the most benevolent kindness from him, clamorously demanded his death; although his heathen judge declared him innocent and guiltless. In fine, he was nailed to a cross, erected for this purpose between those of two public thieves, that were crucified with him. This was the most ignominious punishment then in use, and reserved only for slaves and malefactors of the blackest die.

But think not, Theophilus, that Christ subjected himself to these unparalleled torments through necessity or compulsion. I have told you already that his death was free and voluntary; of which he had often foretold the time, the place and the manner. He advanced to meet his enemies; and, of his own accord, surrendered himself into their merciless hands. In the apparent weakness of his death, he gave evident proofs of his Divinity. He showed himself plainly to be the master of his own life, and the absolute Lord of creation. At his death, the sun was darkened; the earth shook; a mournful obscurity overspread the universe; the veil of the temple was rent in two; the tombs were opened, and the dead arose out of them. They who had attended his execution, returned into Jerusalem, struck with awful horror, and crying aloud, as they beat their breasts; "Indeed, this man was the Son of God."\*

From all this it is apparent that Christ submitted to his death willingly, and from the sole motive of his love to man.

\* Mark xv. 39.

And this is what ought principally to strike us, when we reflect upon his sufferings. He died, only because he loved us. He was pleased to take up the burden of our sins, and to bear the punishment due to them. The innocent substituted himself in the place of the guilty, to receive the severe inflictions, which their crimes had merited; but which he in his mercy, was desirous to avert from them. We had sinned; and God laid upon him the iniquity of us all. Christ, therefore, died for all: nor is there any one, who may not say with St. Paul; "He loved me, and delivered himself for me."\*

Yes, my dear child, you ought to say to yourself: my sins occasioned the Son of God to be put to death. He thought of me. He foresaw the crimes I should one day commit, and to expiate them, he deigned to suffer. The more I sin, the more I contribute to his torments. And are you sensible of the horror, with which this reflection ought to strike you? Do you perceive how much you owe to your loving Redeemer, and the extent of that gratitude, which he deservedly claims of you? Had you been rescued from a fire, and drawn out of the flames by the affection of a friend, who, to preserve you from the danger, should have exposed himself to it, with what heartfelt transports would you not express your acknowledgments! And could you ever forget the claim of gratitude, such an exertion would demand of you? But, Theophilus, you owe infinitely more to Christ. The misfortune, from which the conduct of such a friend would have saved you, is nothing in comparison with the torments of hell. Such a friend would be a man only; but, Jesus Christ is your God; and a God, whom you have injured; this man would have done no more than offer his life, whereas your Redeemer has in reality sacrificed his for you. What return of love can be sufficient, then, for the charity of your God; for a charity so excessive and so sensibly affecting!

At what a price hast thou redeemed me! How dearly has my salvation cost thee, O merciful Jesus! I behold thee saturated with opprobrium, covered with wounds, crowned with thorns and giving up the ghost, in the most cruel torture. Was it not sufficient to become incarnate for us? Was it necessary to pass through such a course of bitter sufferings? Thou wast desirous to show us what sin is; and to make us judge of the magnitude of the evil, by the violence

\* Gal. ii. 20.

of its remedy. And how, after this, can I commit it with such ease! How blind must I be! Sin has cost thee thy life; and yet I dare to yield to it. No, my God! never will I lose sight of this salutary reflection. Under every temptation, I will look at thy cross. I will trace upon my heart the figure of this instrument, sacred to thy memory and to the expiation of sin. This shall be my support amidst the tumult of my passions. By the excess of thy sufferings, thou desirest also to show me, O God! the excess of thy love. Can I be callous to an affection so disinterested and tender? Alas! whatever I may do, my love for thee will fall infinitely short of that which thou hast testified for me. Was I to immolate my life for thee, I should not still do enough. But thou demandest not this sacrifice. All thou requirest is that I should live for thee, as thou hast died for me. And can I be so ungrateful as to refuse this small testimony of gratitude and affection? No, dear Lord, my life belongs to thee, and from this moment I devote it to thy service and love.

### *The Practical Inference.* •

That we should remember that, whenever we sin, we crucify anew our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

---

## CHAPTER XX.

### ON THE BURIAL OF CHRIST AND HIS DESCENT INTO HELL.

*Christ died for our sins, and was buried.* 1. Cor. xv. 3.  
*And he descended into the lower parts of the earth.*  
 Ephes. iv. 9.

OUR Saviour, after suffering the most extreme tortures on the cross, for the space of three hours, at length expired; and that at the very moment in which was immolated the paschal lamb, of which his sacrifice was a figure. To be assured of his death, a soldier pierced his side with a lance, from whence issue a stream of mixed blood and water.

The sense of these words, *Jesus Christ died*, is obvious

and clear. They mean that his soul was divided from his body. But at the same time, you must remark, Theophilus, that his divinity was not separated from either his body or his soul. It continued uninterruptedly united both to the one and to the other; insomuch that, even in the tomb, the body of Christ was still the body of the Son of God, and his soul, in this state of disjunction, the soul also of the Incarnate Word. By dying, Jesus ceased not to be the Son of God. It was the Son of God, that was buried, in his body: it was the Son of God, that, by his soul, descended into hell.

You understand likewise as easily the signification of these words, "Jesus Christ was buried." The Evangelists tell us that Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate, and requested of him the body of Christ, that he might inter it in a proper manner. This being obtained, he took it down from the cross, embalmed it, and laid it in a new sepulchre, that had been cut in a rock. But the body of our Saviour, although deposited in a tomb, was still incorruptible. For so David had prophesied: "Thou wilt not give thy holy one," he says, "to see corruption."\*

The words which form the second part of the text of this lecture, require an explication. "He descended into the lower parts of the earth or hell." What are we to understand by *hell*? This term is used in Scripture to denote a variety of places. First, the residence of the devils and damned souls: this cannot be the place, to which the soul of Christ descended. Neither is it purgatory, where those that die in state of grace, but still with some guilt to expiate, to complete their atonement; but there is a third place, where, in expectation of a Redeemer, the souls of the Patriarchs and other Saints, who had preceded his time, awaited his arrival. Although these pious souls were acceptable to the Deity, they were not admitted into heaven; because the sin of Adam had closed its gates, which could not be reopened, but by the death and ascension of Jesus Christ. Hither then our Saviour descended, to liberate these holy people, and to take them up in triumph to the regions of bliss.

Let us now make some reflections on the burial of Christ, and draw such lessons from it, as may tend to animate our piety. A huge stone had been rolled to the aperture of the sepulchre by those who had interred him. On the other hand,

\* Ps. xv. 10.

the Jews had put a seal upon this stone, and had there placed a guard of soldiers; for fear, they said, lest his disciples should steal away the body, and then publish to the world that their Master was risen, according to his promise. Thus did Divine Providence dispose of things; in order to render more authentic the death and resurrection of Christ, by the very measures which his enemies took to prevent all imposture. The Almighty uses, for the execution of his plans, the obstacles themselves that men oppose to his designs. Interment was necessary to prove the reality of his death. Had our Saviour risen immediately, or in a short space of time, his enemies would not have failed to assert, that he had not been really dead. Unless the Jews had guarded so watchfully the monument, where his body was laid, they might have affirmed with some plausibility, that his disciples had carried it off. But his remaining three days in a tomb closed up, sealed and well guarded, evinces, beyond dispute, that he assuredly was dead; and establishes the faith of his glorious resurrection. For the certainty of his death being established, the testimony of the Apostles in favour of his resurrection,—a testimony confirmed by their miraculous works, leaves no room to doubt that he truly rose again.

Thus was completed the redemption of man. Jesus Christ submitted to the stroke of death; and, by his own death, sanctified ours. He merited for us the grace of making an acceptable sacrifice of this penalty of sin. Jesus Christ submitted to the humiliation of the tomb; to take from the grave what nature finds repugnant in it, and to give us the consolation of hoping for the future resurrection of our own bodies. The sight of our leader, shut up in the sepulchre, whence he quickly arises to a new life, ensures us the accomplishment of what the Apostle thus promises: "The body is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory; it is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body."\*

Thou hast subjected thyself, O God! to all the punishments due to sin; and by this thy submission, thou hast sweetened their bitterness and turned them into blessings. By thy death, thou hast procured us a right to immortality. Thy death has altered the nature of ours. It was but a punishment due to our disobedience; whereas, united to thine, it is become the greatest and most agreeable sacrifice we can offer

\* I. Cor. xv. 42—44.

to the Deity. Death is now nothing more than a passage from a life of misery to a life of happiness,—from a transitory and fleeting state, to an immortal and permanent state. If death has its pangs, thy example strengthens us, and teaches us to resign ourselves with submission, and to expire with confidence. Or, if the grave inspires dread, the reflection that thou didst descend into it, and didst arise from it triumphant, revives our drooping spirits. If apprehension suggests that we are about to enter an unknown land, we know thou hast thyself first explored it; and that thou wilt there be our guide, our support, and our recompense. Grant, O my God! that when I come to die, my love may exceed my fear; and that, entertaining in thy regard the sentiments of a child, I may be enabled to say with joy, “Father! into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should unite our death to that of our Redeemer.

---

## CHAPTER XXI.

### ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

*God raised him from the dead, the third day, who was seen, for many days, by those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who to this present time are his witnesses to the people.* Acts xiii. 30, 31.

JESUS Christ remained in the sepulchre but three days. On the third day he raised himself from the dead; that is, he reunited his soul to his body, and came forth from his monument in triumph, as he had often foretold he should. “Behold!” said he, “we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to be mocked, and scourged, and crucified; and the third day he shall rise again.”\* “As Jonas was in the

\* Math. xx. 18, 19.

whale's belly three days and three nights: so shall the son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights."\* The Apostles had seen the first part of this prediction verified in his sufferings and death: but the completion of the second they were to wait for with confidence. Nevertheless, dejected by the ignominy of his passion, they were not disposed to believe his resurrection. For some time, they continued to reject the repeated assurances they received of it: nor did they yield at length, till compelled to own the truth, by the evidence of the fact: their seeing and feeling him could alone extort their assent. God permitted they should doubt and be slow in believing, to the end, that being convinced themselves by the clearest proofs, they might afterwards convince the world; and that their incredulity might confirm our faith.

As the resurrection of Christ is the foundation of his religion, so the Deity has been pleased that this foundation should be immoveable. For this reason, he has omitted nothing, that could tend to remove our doubts, and to set this matter in so clear a light, as not to be questionable, except by those who are voluntarily blind. St. Luke says: "he showed himself (to the Apostles) alive after his passion, appearing to them, and speaking of the kingdom of God."† He discovered himself, first, to the pious women, who had come to the sepulchre, to embalm his body. He, next, showed himself to St. Peter; and then, to the two disciples, that were going to Emmaus, to whom he explained the Scriptures. He, afterwards appeared to the whole assembly of the Apostles with whom he eat, and to whom he showed his wounds. St. Thomas being absent on that occasion, and continuing obstinate in his disbelief of Christ's resurrection, from not having seen him, he appeared a second time, when they were all met together, with St. Thomas in their company; and, to convince his incredulity, made him touch the wounds of his hands and feet and put his finger into his side. Thomas no longer able to resist the truth, exclaimed with rapture, *My Lord and my God.*‡

Our Saviour also manifested himself to seven of his disciples, as they were fishing on the lake of Tiberias. He enabled them by his power, to make a miraculous capture of fish; and then eat with them. He afterwards exacted of St. Peter

\* Math. xii. 40.

† Acts. i. 3.

‡ John xx. 20.

a testimony of his love; and this he made him repeat three times, as it were to satisfy for his having three times denied him. He then conferred on him the government of his Church, and forewarned him of the kind of martyrdom, by which he should afterwards suffer death. He ordered his disciples to hasten to Galilee; and pointed out the spot to them, where they should see him in all his splendour. Thither they repaired, to the number of five hundred, and he there manifested himself to them. In fine, having spent forty days in consoling, and instructing his Apostles; in confirming their faith, and laying the foundations of his Church, the time being arrived for his quitting the earth, he conducted his disciples to the mountain of Olives. He once more inculcated the sublimest truths; to these he added the most consolatory promises. He then raised up his hands; gave them his blessing; and in the act of so doing, was lifted from the earth, and borne up to heaven, in the presence of them all.

If we unite in one point of view what the Evangelists relate concerning the different apparitions of Jesus Christ, we must suppose they could not fail to produce the most complete conviction on the minds of the Apostles. These apparitions were neither few nor transient. During forty days, they several times saw him: they eat, and conversed with him: they received instructions relative "to the kingdom of God," that is to say, his Church; proposing their difficulties, and hearing his answers. They had both the time and the means to discover the truth; insomuch that their persuasion was totally removed from all suspicion of a rash and hasty credulity. They began by not believing, by doubting; and they only surrendered to the irresistible force of proofs, and to the evidence of facts. These facts, so visible and palpable, precluded mistrust, and left no room for illusion or surprise; especially as so many witnesses were concerned therein. If, at first, they were apprehensive that what they saw was a spirit; "Touch me," Christ said:—"See my hands and feet; that it is I myself; handle and see; a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me to have."\* They see, they feel, they are assured; and, convinced of his resurrection, they bear testimony of it throughout the universe. They every where preach up Jesus risen from the dead; they every where meet with numberless contradictions; and in spite of these contra-

\* Luke xxiv. 39.



dictions, the mystery which they announce, is every where received.

The proofs of thy resurrection, O Lord, given to thy Apostles, were so manifest and clear, as to do away all doubt. Thou didst appear to them at different times, for the space of forty days, conversing with them, satisfying their questions and unfolding to them the meaning of various passages of the Scripture. Thou didst show them thy wounds, and they touched them with their hands. Thou didst eat with them. Thou didst inform them of the change to be effected, by their means, on the face of the universe. Thou art, then, truly risen, and this thy resurrection, is the immoveable basis of the religion thou hast founded. The truth of what thou taughtest is invincibly proved by the fact of thy resurrection. Since thou hast risen again, thou art surely the Son of God, as well as the Son of man. Since thou art arisen again, thy doctrine is true, and thy religion divine. In believing thy resurrection, I believe all the mysteries of the Christian system, without exception or reserve.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should thank Almighty God for having established our faith on such unquestionable evidence.

---

## CHAPTER XXII.

### REFLECTIONS ON THE RESURRECTION.

*Jesus showed himself alive after his passion, by many proofs; for forty days appearing to them. Acts i. 3.*

I HAVE already laid before you, Theophilus, the proofs of the resurrection: but it will be proper to make some farther observations on the strength of these same proofs, as they serve to render more evident the necessity of yielding to the testimony of the Apostles.

We cannot suppose they were deceived or deluded. To assert this, we must say the whole assembly of the disciples

imagined they saw Christ, heard him, touched him, eat and talked with him, and this for a continuation of forty days; that they fancied they heard from his mouth many new and important things, concerning the publication of the Gospel, the settlement of the Church, and the administration of the Sacraments; while at the same time they neither saw nor heard any thing. The absurdity of such a supposition is too gross to be admitted. We may be deceived, it is true, in a judgment formed upon opinion only. But to be misled upon a notorious and palpable fact; to imagine we see, for the space of forty days, what we do not see; that we hear what we do not hear; that we touch a person, whom we touch not; and that we eat with him when he is not present; all this, I say, is incredible; especially, when not one person only, but more than five hundred are supposed the dupes of such an illusion.

It is, therefore, impossible that the disciples were imposed upon as to the matter of fact. Neither is it to be thought that they wished to impose upon us; or that they published this resurrection without being fully persuaded of it. They announced the resurrection of Christ in the very capital of the country, and on the spot where it happened. They announce it on the fiftieth day from his death; at a time, when it would have been easy to unveil the imposture. They announce it to the supreme council of the nation, to the heads of the priests, who, by it, stood convicted of the enormous guilt of deicide: and they announced it boldly. Had they not been assured that Christ was truly risen, would they have exposed themselves to the face of day? Would they have despised the menaces of the rulers of the people, whom this resurrection had rendered furious? St. Peter was four times laden with chains for it. Would the man, who had trembled at the voice of a servant-maid, had the courage to preach Christ risen from the dead, in the most solemn assembly of the nation, had he not been convinced of the truth of what he affirmed? But so far from being convicted of falsehood, St. Peter, by his first sermon, converted three, and by his second, five, thousand persons. The number of those, who were ocular witnesses of his resurrection, was above five hundred; and of these five hundred not a single one retracted his testimony: all of them, from first to last, uniformly persisted in it, in defiance of the fear of torture, or the threats of impending death. Almost all of them suffered martyrdom in defence of this fact. Nevertheless, they had not the smallest advantage,

or worldly interest in maintaining it. They could gain nothing by it, for this life: on the contrary, they had every thing to lose; and exposed themselves voluntarily to certain ignominy, and death.

You know, perhaps, my child, what persecutions the Apostles and the other disciples underwent. These persecutions continued till their deaths; which, for the most part, were violent. But it would be, in the highest degree, absurd to suppose that five hundred people conspired, at the expense of their ease, their liberty and their life, to force upon the world an unheard of fact, which they knew to be a deception. If they did not believe that Jesus Christ was risen, they would have considered him as a cheat; and on this supposition, would never have sacrificed their lives for him: for a people are not disposed to devote themselves for a known impostor. The testimony of the Apostles is, then, indisputable evidence of the fact. For it is not possible to refuse assent to ocular witnesses, who, beholding their tortures with an undaunted eye, and writhing with agony, still firmly exclaim; "What we announce to you we have seen with our eyes, we have heard with our ears, we have felt with our hands."

Nor is this all. In confirmation of their evidence, the Apostles performed the most signal miracles. St. Peter, in a moment, restores to the use of his limbs a man of forty years of age, who from his birth had been a cripple, and known as such to the whole city; and this miraculous cure he works, in the name of Christ risen from the dead, in the temple and in the presence of a crowd of people. The sick of all descriptions are brought forth into the streets, through which he is to pass; and the very shadow of the Apostle restores them to health. Jesus Christ, therefore, is risen; since the mere invocation of his name, can effect such wonders. Let us, then, finally conclude, that there is nothing more certain, nothing more unquestionable than the resurrection of our Saviour.

Yes, my God! thou art truly arisen. More than five hundred ocular witnesses have borne testimony to this fact; and many of them have sealed it with their blood. The force of truth and the strength of thy grace alone could have induced them to publish, and to maintain with such constancy, the reality of a fact, which otherwise would appear incredible. Fearful and timid during thy life, they became bold and courageous at the time, when, if thou wert not risen again,

thou couldst not have supported them. The incredulity of the Jews, so far from shaking, only tends to confirm my faith. Their blindness had been long before predicted by the prophets. Thou thyself, O Lord! in foretelling thy resurrection, foretolddest also the obstinacy of this incredulous race, their ruin and their dispersion. Universally proscribed, and wandering over the face of the globe, they carry to all nations, in spite of themselves, the clearest proofs of thy resurrection. How true, O God! are thy oracles! how certain! how worthy of credit! What thou proposest to our belief is, indeed, mysterious. But these mysteries are so established by the most indubitable evidence, that it would be madness not to assent to them; and incredulity, in their regard, would be no less contrary to reason than to faith.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should bewail the misfortune of those who close their eyes to so strong a light.

---

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### ON THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST; AND HIS SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, THE FATHER.

*While they looked on, he was raised up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. Acts i. 9. He is on the right-hand of God. 1 Peter iii. 22.*

FORTY days after his resurrection, Jesus Christ assembled his disciples on mount Olivet; and there, lifting up his hands, he blessed and quitted them. For a time, they saw him ascend; but a cloud interposed, and prevented all farther view of him. Thus he was raised up to heaven; where he now sits, in glory, at the right-hand of his Father.

When you are told, my dear Theophilus, that Christ is seated at the right-hand of God, do not imagine that God has a body. These words are not to be understood in a literal sense. They are figurative expressions adapted to our ideas.

Under this image, the Holy Ghost would have us conceive that the humanity of Jesus Christ is elevated, in heaven, to the most exalted degree of glory and power; and that he there reposes, after his labours, as on the everlasting seat of his empire. When a monarch associates his son in his royalty, he seats him on a throne, aside him; to show that he would have him considered as his equal; and that it is his will that all the orders of the state should pay him similar deference, as they do to himself. Now, the Scripture represents the Almighty seated on a throne, as the great King of heaven and earth. When, therefore, you are told that Christ is sitting at the right-hand of God, the Father, you are to understand that, since he is equal to his Father, as God, he is also, as man, superior to all creatures, both in effulgence of glory and plenitude of power; because his sacred humanity has the advantage of being united to the person of the Word.

Our Redeemer, amidst his glory, is employed about us. He is attentive to our wants. He executes in heaven the office of Mediator in our behalf. He exhibits to his Father the scars of the wounds, received in his passion, to implore his mercy in favour of mankind. He is our Advocate and our Protector. "If any man sin," says St. John, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just."\* Our sins accuse us at the tribunal of God: but Christ pleads our cause; and the voice of his blood is more efficacious to obtain mercy, than that of our crimes to call down vengeance. Jesus Christ is in heaven as our King and our Lord. He has an absolute power over us; not only because he created, and preserved us; but also because he redeemed us by the effusion of his blood.

We belong, then, to Christ as his inheritance and conquest. Whence St. Paul concludes that no one can live and die for himself: but that, whether we live or die, we appertain to the Lord. Jesus Christ is in heaven in the quality of our High-priest. This function he performed upon the altar of the cross, when he offered himself to his Father as a victim for our sins. He performs it likewise in heaven, where, at the right-hand of his Father, he presents himself before him, to effect our peace. And, as his priesthood is eternal, he will be always able to save them, that approach to God through him and his merits. "Having therefore a great High Priest,

\* John ii. 1.

that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a High Priest, who cannot compassionate our infirmities; but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin. Let us, therefore, go with confidence to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid.”\*

Finally, Christ in heaven is our Head; the head of a body, of which we are the members. The body I speak of, is the Church; and Christ, in regard to his Church, is what a head is to a body. He communicates life to it, and animates it with his spirit. Every grace, every good work, desire or thought, is derived from the plenitude of this our heavenly Chief. “Jesus Christ,” says the Council of Trent, “diffuses his spirit incessantly in the hearts of the just, as a head imparts life to its members, or, a vine to its branches.” Such is the noble dignity of a Christian. He is a member of a body, of which the Son of God is the head, and which his spirit invigorates; becoming, by this means, a partaker of the Divinity. In consequence thereof, Theophilus, you should unite yourself to your Saviour, so as never, by sin, to be separated from him. You should bear a tender affection to the Church, your mother; the body, as it were, of Christ, to which you have the happiness to be so closely allied.

Thou didst assure us, O Lord, before thy ascension, that thou wert going to heaven to prepare us a place. We hope then to follow thee, whither thou art gone beforehand. Thou art our head: and as, by baptism, we are become thy members, we may confidently expect to be admitted into thy kingdom, and to have a share in thy glory. Thy felicity is not different, or separated from ours. This thou hast declared in that prayer, which thou madest before thy passion: “Father I will where I am, that they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me.”† Draw us to thyself, O God! Suffer us not to harbour any attachment to the earth, which is but the place of our exile. Make us continually aspire after heaven, where thou thyself art sitting, at the right-hand of thy Father. Teach us to raise up our thoughts, and to fix our hearts there. May we ever consider ourselves as travellers here below; and may it be our most ardent wish to arrive at our true country, and to become inhabitants of that holy city, where thou reignest, and where thou hast promised that we shall hereafter

\* Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16.

† John xvii. 24.

reign with thee. The glory which surrounds thee, is the reward of thy profound humiliations. We freely accept whatever afflictions thou mayest send us, that, being united to thine, they may obtain for us a part in thy bliss. Can we be unwilling to submit to the short sufferings of this life, when we reflect on the immense and eternal weight of glory, with which thou dost reward them in the next?

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should cherish with all care the desire of heaven.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

**JESUS CHRIST WILL COME TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.**

*It is he, who is appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead. Acts x. 42.*

OUR faith informs us that Christ is to be the judge of all mankind. "For neither doth the Father judge any man," says our Lord himself, "but hath given all judgment to the Son,"\* that all may honour the Son, as they honour the Father. It is certain, then, that we shall all be summoned to the tribunal of Christ, there to render an account of our actions, during our abode in this world, and to receive the sentence of our eternal destiny, according to our merits.

It is the immutable decree of Heaven that all shall die, and after death shall be judged. But there are two sorts of judgments. The first, which we name the particular judgment, is passed on each one, at the moment of his dissolution. No sooner shall the soul quit the body, than God will cite us to answer for all our actions, all our words, and all our thoughts. We shall each of us be examined in regard to the evil we may have done, and to the good we shall have omitted; and our doom be settled for an endless eternity. This particular judgment shall be executed in an instant. Such souls,

\* John v. 22.

as have nothing more to expiate, shall be immediately received into the mansions of the blessed: and those, that, by their sins shall have deserved the fire of hell, shall instantly be consigned to its avenging torments; while awaiting the general resurrection, which shall reunite the soul and body, and thus ultimately complete the happiness of the virtuous and the misery of the wicked.

Then shall come the general judgment, in which the sentence shall be ratified, that shall have been previously pronounced on each one. This general judgment shall be preceded by the most terrifying signs. Our Saviour himself has drawn the picture of it in the Gospel. There shall be wars, famine, pestilence and earthquakes: the sun and moon shall be darkened: the stars shall fall from the firmament: the agitated sea shall rage with ungovernable fury; and men shall wither away with dread and expectation of the evils to come, of which these are but the preludes. Then, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet, the dead shall arise. The sign of the Son of man,—that is a luminous and brilliant cross,—shall be displayed in the air; and Jesus Christ, encircled in power and majesty, shall visibly descend to render to each one according to his deserts. He shall be attended by his Angels, who, in obedience to his command, shall instantly separate the good from the bad. Alas! What a dismal separation! How different the lot, that awaits them! The elect shall be placed on the right, the reprobate on the left-hand of this majestic and sovereign judge.

Then shall every conscience be laid open to the eyes of the assembled universe. Nothing so secret at present, that shall not then be exposed. Then the just man, so long the object of derision and contempt, shall appear crowned with the good works he had carefully concealed: while the sinner shall be covered with shame, at the sight of his crimes, which he had hidden with such industry. Then shall vice appear in its genuine colours, with all the hideousness and infamy, that naturally belong to it. Ah! how great then will be the joy of the virtuous, who shall have despised the enticements of the wicked, and resisted the impression of their contagious example! How amply will they be compensated for the battles they may have fought, and for the taunts with which they have borne. But, on the other side, what despair will seize the libertine, on seeing his crimes exposed to the glare



of mid-day, to the view of heaven and earth,—crimes, which he thought he had covered with impenetrable darkness. What fury, when he beholds the persons, at whom he had pointed his ridicule, numbered with the Saints and the children of God! What a horror will he then conceive for vice, which he now thinks so charming! But all this is only preparatory.

What will be our feelings, when we hear distinctly pronounced the awful sentence of the judge! Every creature being buried in silence, and in anxious expectation of hearing his eternal doom, the Son of God shall speak these consolatory words to those on the right-hand: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." Then, turning to the reprobate: "Depart," he will say with the strongest accents of indignation, "Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire."\* No sooner shall this award be thus solemnly pronounced, than the good shall be received into the embraces of their God, and begin their reign with him, to be continued throughout eternity; while the wicked shall be engulfed in hell, for a never ending eternity. The heavens shall then be destroyed, the burning elements dissolved, and the earth, with all its contents consumed by raging flames.

Prevent, my dear Theophilus, the dire effects of this dreadful judgment. Lose no time in making your peace with God and recovering the grace of heaven. Follow the advice of your Saviour. "Take heed of yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting;—and that day come upon you suddenly. For as a snare, shall it come upon all that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of man."†

The day will assuredly come, O God! when thou wilt appear in all thy majesty, to judge the human race. For the wicked, it shall be a day of terror and despair: for the virtuous, a day of triumph and consolation. And what will it be for me, O Lord! When I examine my past life, have I not reason to apprehend that I shall be of the number of the reprobate? With what face shall I appear before thee? How great will be my confusion! The actions, I have con-

\* Math. xxv. 34, 35, 41.

† Luke xxi. 34—36.

cealed with so much care from the eyes of men, will be revealed to the universe, unless I efface them by a sincere repentance. I shall be responsible to thee for each idle word: how much more for the wicked speeches, I have either uttered or listened to? How terrible, O God! will be thy scrutiny! How dreadful to meet a judge, whose knowledge cannot be imposed on, and whose justice is inflexible. Ah, dear Lord! enter not into judgment with thy servant. Try me not in thy indignation; nor suffer a soul to be lost, for which thou hast given thy life. The time of mercy is not yet elapsed, I may still disarm thy justice. Grant me, O God! the grace to wash away all my past sins, by the tears of a true compunction; and to avoid all sin, in future, by the sense of thy awful judgments.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should often call to mind the terrors of the last judgment.

---

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE HOLY GHOST IS THE THRID PERSON OF THE BLESSED TRINITY.

*But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me. John xv. 26.*

It is not enough, Theophilus, to believe in God the Father Almighty, who created us, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who redeemed us: we must, moreover, believe in the Holy Ghost, who solaces and sanctifies us. For this reason, having proposed to our faith the power of the Father and the mysteries regarding the Son, the Apostles, in the next place, set before us briefly what relates to the Holy Ghost.

It is, therefore, as necessary you should be instructed in what concerns the Holy Ghost, as in what belongs to the Father and to his Son, Jesus Christ. You must believe,

then, with a firm faith, that in the Godhead there is a third person, whom we style the Holy Ghost: that this third person proceeds from the Father and the Son; and that he has the same nature and the same Divinity, as the two other persons. Thus the Holy Ghost is in all things equal to them: he is eternal, omnipotent, infinite, as they are: he has the same perfections: in a word, he is the same God, as the Father and the Son. In his name, as in that of the two other persons, we are baptized: and since he is the same God, it is our duty to render him the same homage and service. Hence the Holy Spirit is adored and conjointly glorified with the Father and the Son; as in that sacred doxology, which we so frequently repeat; "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

To this divine Spirit is particularly attributed the blessing of our sanctification: because he is the Spirit of love, and diffuses in our hearts that charity which sanctifies them. "The charity of God," says St. Paul, "is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us."\* It is from the Holy Ghost, then, that we receive our spiritual life; or rather it is he, who is the life of our souls, as the soul is the life of the body. The soul has no life but inasmuch as it is united with this Spirit of God; inasmuch as he resides in, and animates her to action. The soul can do nothing that has any reference to God, or to its own salvation, but by the impulse and direction of this vivifying Spirit. He is the Spirit of adoption, by whom we are made the children of God; that sacred seal, which is the certain pledge of our eternal inheritance. He is called in the Scripture "the Spirit of truth," by which is meant that he is the source of all truth, and the director to guide us to it. "When he, the Spirit of truth is come," says Christ, "he will teach you all truth."† In fact, he descended on the Apostles, and, in an instant, enlightened and imparted to them the knowledge of the most sublime and awful truths. It is he, who, of old, spoke by the Prophets and Evangelists. By the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, St. Paul tells us, they that were deputed for this purpose, declared the will of heaven. Whence we learn that the inspired writers were but the organs of the Holy Ghost, and that the words of the Scriptures are the words of God him-

\* Rom. v. 5.

† John xvi. 13.

self. With what respect, therefore, should we not receive them! And what a crime is it to profane them!

It is this Spirit of God, who is alone our instructor, and who dispels, by his light, the darkness of our ignorance. He shows us the road to heaven, and enables us to pursue it. "Thy good Spirit," says the Psalmist, "shall lead me into the right land,"\* the way that leads to salvation. He speaks to us internally, to divert us from evil, and to inspire us with the love of that good, which it is our duty to practise. Often has it been suggested to you, Theophilus, that virtue alone can constitute your happiness; and often have you perceived rising within you the desire of adhering to it. This suggestion, this pious sentiment is the voice of the Holy Ghost. Him, therefore, we resist, when we reject such intimations. Let us reflect that we cannot be deemed the children of God, unless we suffer ourselves to be guided by the direction of his Spirit.

He is also denominated in Scripture the *Paraclete* or *Comforter*. "When the Paraclete cometh he shall give testimony of me."† He is given us to console us under our sufferings and afflictions. How preferable this consolation to the flimsy comforts of the world! It renders light and tolerable the miseries of life. It calms the ruffled passions, and instills into the mind the most enviable tranquillity. Adore, then, this sacred Spirit, the author of all your good. Entreat him to communicate himself to you, to sanctify your soul, and to replenish it with that unction and sacred benignity, which renders virtue amiable, and its practice sweet and pleasant.

Happy, O God! a thousand times happy is the man, whom thou dost animate, enlighten and console! His understanding is informed, and his will inflamed by the glowing ardour of charity. In the midst of the sharpest afflictions, he experiences a delicious peace,—that peace of God which surpasses all comprehension, and of which nothing can deprive him. Come to me, then, O blessed Spirit,—Thou who art the ineffable bond of union between the Father and the Son. Come, Spirit of truth! enlighten my mind, and dispel its darkness by the brightness of thy presence. Guide my wandering steps, and conduct them in all things, to the completion of thy will. Come, O Spirit of Charity! Sanctifying Spirit! Thou, who, by the ministry of the Apostles, didst

\* Ps. cxlii. 10.

† John xv. 26.

renew the face of the earth, give me a new heart, enkindle in it thy sacred love, and consume all my earthly dross, by the ardour of its heavenly flames. Come, thou Spirit of consolation! and vouchsafe to assuage my pains, to calm my troubled spirits, and to fill me with thy holy joy, the foretaste of that ineffable bliss, which thou designest for me in heaven.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should undertake nothing, without applying to the Holy Ghost for his direction.

---

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### ON THE INSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

*The Church was edified (i. e. established) walking in the fear of the Lord, and was filled with the consolation of the Holy Ghost. Acts ix. 31.*

HAVING received the Holy Ghost, the Apostles boldly ventured to announce the resurrection of Christ to the people of Jerusalem, whom they astonished by their miracles. The effect of St. Peter's first sermon was the conversion of three, that of his second of five, thousand souls. The number of the faithful daily augmented: while these same proselytes, regenerated by baptism and renewed by the Spirit of God, presented to the world a spectacle of the most-disinterested and perfect virtue. The Apostles, afterwards, preached the word of God, with like success, throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria. From thence they passed into Syria and Asia Minor; into Macedon and Greece; every where publishing the Gospel, that is to say, the happy news of man's redemption, by the death of Jesus Christ. St. Peter carried the faith to Rome, at that time the seat of empire and the capital of the world.

Out of this variety of nations, so different in manners and habits, was, in a short time, formed a new people, a society

of men,—united together by the profession of the same faith, by the participation of the same sacraments and by the communication of the same spiritual treasures:—having the same invisible head, Jesus Christ, and the same visible head, St. Peter, first Pope, and bishop of Rome. This society, or body, is called the Church of Christ; which was formed and established in defiance of every obstacle. The Jews opposed the Gospel with inveterate obstinacy, and persecuted with rage the disciples of Jesus Christ. The Heathens, on the other side, were eager to suppress it. The most distinguished among them, from the beginning, declared themselves its enemies. But, in spite of the fury of the Jews and the opposition of the Heathens; in spite of the power of the Emperors, and the still stronger influence of corruption and prejudice, the Apostles established the Church of Christ in all the countries of the universe, and sealed with their blood the truths they taught. Those, whom they had chosen to succeed them in the functions of their ministry, imitated their zeal; and, in like manner, transmitted to their successors the faith, entrusted to them; which, by these means, has, from age to age, been handed down to our days in its original purity.

Let us now make some observations, Theophilus, on the establishment of Religion, which is so clearly the work of God. Represent to yourself twelve men of the lowest class of society, without money, without knowledge, without protection; to whom their master promises nothing, in this life, but persecutions, torments and death. Such were the Apostles. Can one suppose that twelve such men, unless actuated by the Spirit of God, could have dared to undertake to alter the face of the universe, to convert the world, Greeks and Romans, Jews and Gentiles; and this by proposing to all of them mysteries the most difficult to be credited, and rules of conduct the hardest to be practised! Nevertheless, these twelve men, unsupported by human means, with no other weapons than their tongues, no other defence than their patience, not only dared to form a project so extraordinary, but even executed it. They preached a doctrine that subjects the understanding, and imposes a restraint upon the will. They preached this doctrine in the centre of the Roman empire; in the most rich and populous towns; in cities, where both knowledge and pleasure had set up their earthly throne, at Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, and Rome itself. The whole world rose up in arms against this strange

and novel doctrine. Every engine was set at play to stifle it in its birth, and to prevent the farther growth of it; banishment, confiscation, prisons and torture were employed. Notwithstanding which, Christianity, of all things in the world the most difficult and arduous to impress upon the mind, was universally established by the sole voice of persuasion; in defiance of whatever opposition could be made to it by human power, knowledge, passions, policy, interest, and the most unrestrained violence.

We must allow, my child, that natural means had no share in this event, in which we cannot but see the finger of the Deity visibly manifested. For, in fine, either the Apostles wrought miracles, to convince the world of the truth of the doctrine they announced; or they converted the world without miracles. If they wrought miracles, it is clear that God himself presided over this work. If they persuaded the world to believe them independently of miracles, this only renders the proof more evident; since nothing but the power of Heaven could have produced such a persuasion, opposed as it was by obstacles so numerous and so forcible. A conviction; such as this, produced without miracles, would itself be the greatest miracle, we can possibly conceive.

Thou didst foretel, O Christ! that, when thou shouldst be raised from the earth, that is; when thou shouldst be fastened to the cross, thou wouldst attract all things to thee. We now see this prediction completely verified. The conversion of the world could only be the effect of thy omnipotence; and we cannot reflect upon it, without being struck with astonishment. It is plain that the execution of so arduous a project was impracticable to all the wisdom and power of the earth. The very means thou didst employ, were hindrances to the design. Thou wast pleased to select twelve obscure, indigent, and illiterate men, to show that thou didst not need any human assistance, nor the aid of earthly force. Thou didst choose the foolish of the world, to confound the wise; the weak of the world, to confound the strong, and the most contemptible of the world, to confound the proud, and to humble human presumption. To thee, then, solely can we ascribe the formation of the religion that bears thy holy name: and thou wouldst appear single and alone in it, to afford us an undoubted proof that this religion is divine. Yes, O Jesus! it is thy work. To thee belongs the glory of the success that attended it, which visibly bears the mark of thy infinite power.

I thank thee for having pleased to make it so easy and reasonable. We must do violence to our natural sentiments, before we can reject the evidence that demonstrates its truth.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we ought to admire the power of God in the conversion of the world,

---

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON THE CONSTANCY OF THE MARTYRS IN DEFENCE OF THE  
FAITH OF CHRIST.

*And they indeed went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproof for the name of Jesus. Acts v. 41.*

WE have seen, Theophilus, that as soon as Christianity made its appearance, it became an object of general persecution. This persecution did not end with the lives of its primitive founders. For three hundred years, all the powers of earth continued to be leagued against it. During this interval of time, there were ten persecutions, raised and authorized by the imperial edicts; and an innumerable multitude of Christians, of both sexes, and of every age and condition, suffered torments and death, in defence of the Christian faith.

One cannot read, without horror, the barbarous cruelties inflicted on them, and the various tortures invented to punish and torment them. They were stretched upon a rack, with cords fastened to their hands and feet. They were hung up by their hands, with heavy weights tied to them; and, in this posture, were beaten with rods, or whips tipped with iron. Their flesh was torn from their bones with iron combs and hooks, so as to lay bare their very entrails. If they survived these torments, to render their wounds more excruciating, salt and vinegar were poured into them, being reopened as they were beginning to close: and the martyrs were remanded



to prison, to undergo farther trials. Moreover, the gloomy prisons themselves were another kind of punishment. They were the most dark and infected dungeons; where these victims of their faith were loaded with irons; weighty pieces of wood were tied round their necks, or ropes about their legs, to elevate and distend them, while they laid flat upon their backs. Sometimes their tormentors strewed the floors of these prisons with fragments of broken glass, and rolled the martyrs on them, naked and mangled as they were. At other times they suffered their wounds to putrify, and let them perish with hunger. Now and then, they fed them, and dressed their sores; but only to reserve them for some fresh scene of cruelty. Generally, they were restricted from all kind of intercourse with others: because it was known that, in this condition, they frequently made converts, not only among the Infidels, but even among their very jailers and guards. The punishment, which terminated these tortures, was either to be beheaded, burnt alive, cast into the sea, or devoured by wild beasts.

Amidst the longest and keenest sufferings, the martyrs continued firm and inflexible; and their very torments seemed to add to their courage, and to increase their resolution. Neither was it the stronger sex only that displayed this invincible constancy: delicate women and tender children were also sharers in this heroic fortitude: so powerful was the grace of Christ, which animated and supported them. Ecclesiastical history furnishes examples of endurance and courage, superior not only to human strength, but even to admiration. We cannot read, without astonishment, what the martyrs of Lyons and Vienna suffered, under the emperor Marcus Aurelius; what Eusebius relates of the martyrs of Palestine, and Sozomenes of those of Persia; what we find in the original acts of the martyrs of Africa; among whom, two women of high birth, St. Perpetua and St. Felicitas, distinguished themselves eminently, notwithstanding the infirmity and weakness of their sex. All these generous champions endured, with unconquerable patience, such inflictions, as it makes us shudder to relate; and some suffered them even with alacrity and joy. They went voluntarily to meet them, and feared only to be spared. Hear the letter, which St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, wrote to the Christians at Rome, at the time when he was actually upon his way to that city, there to be exposed to the ferocity of wild beasts. "I fear," he tells them, "lest your

kindness should be a detriment to me. I conjure you not to love me unreasonably. Permit me to become the food of those wild and savage animals that will send me to my God. I am the wheat of the Lord, and I shall be ground by the teeth of beasts, to be made the bread of Jesus Christ. I hope I shall find them ready. I will encourage them, that they may devour me quickly; and that they may not fear touching me, as they have others before me. If they refuse it, I will force them. Pardon me: I know what is for my good. Now I begin to be a follower and disciple of Christ. No creature, whether visible or invisible, shall prevent my coming to him. Let fire, the cross, beasts, the separation of my bones, the dismemberment of my body, or whatever other torments, be my portion, provided I do but enjoy my beloved Jesus Christ."

You here see the eagerness with which this holy man longed to give his life for his Saviour. You know that St. Laurence, while broiling on the gridiron, desired his executioners to turn him on the other side; because he no longer felt the fire on the one that was already burnt. What a language to use amidst the most agonizing tortures! Whence did these heroes of Christianity derive such invincible courage, as made them scoff at pain, and defy death in all its shapes? Who gave them that fortitude, superior to whatever the most tyrannic cruelty could invent? Such magnanimity and firmness could come from God alone. You must yourself be sensible that it is not natural to man; and, of course, that a divine power was requisite to support their natural weakness. Wherefore, the religion which the martyrs thus cemented with their blood, is descended from heaven. Most assuredly it is. Never could it have subsisted, had not an Almighty hand sustained it, amidst such reiterated assaults. But God enabled it to triumph over the rage and malice of its enemies; and all their efforts, which, in a natural way, were more than enough to crush, only served to confirm it. The more violent the persecutions, the greater progress religion made. The blood of the martyrs was a fruitful seed, that produced daily new Christians; and after persecuting the disciples of Christ with the utmost virulence and malignity, the whole world, at length bowed humbly to their creed, and embraced the Christian faith.

Thou wast pleased, O God! to permit thy infant Church to be so long and so cruelly persecuted, in order to show

more conspicuously the strength of thy powerful arm. Thou didst suffer the universe to arm against her, while patience was her sole defence. Thou didst tell thy disciples that they should be as lambs amidst wolves; and this lesson, so difficult in practice, they made the rule of their conduct. On one occasion, an entire legion was seen to ground their arms, and permit themselves to be massacred, without resistance or opposition. The wolves they converted, by displaying the weakness of the lamb. The cruelty of the tyrants was forced to give way to the unconquerable firmness and patience of the martyrs. Thou alone, O Lord! couldst dictate such extraordinary means. Thou alone couldst give success to them. It was thou thyself, who didst fight in these generous champions. It was thou who didst inspire them, not only with constancy under the most excruciating torments, but even with a desire and longing to suffer for thy sake. Strengthened by thy grace, the weaker sex, the tenderest age, despised death, and tired out the cruelty of their bloody executioners. The heathens themselves, when they witnessed such fortitude, confessed thy hand; and, compelled to admire a religion, which taught mankind to rise superior to the most terrible trials, declared themselves Christians.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should beg of God a share in the faith and courage of the martyrs.

---

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### ON THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH.

*One Lord, one faith, one baptism.—You are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. Ephes. iv. 5. and ii. 20.*

**THE Church is the society or assemblage of all the faithful, united in the same body, and governed by lawful pastors; of**

which society Jesus Christ is supreme head, and the Pope, as bishop of Rome, his vicegerent and representative. It is easy to distinguish the true Church of Christ from the many different sects which assume this venerable name. For she has four distinctive marks, that belong exclusively to her.

First, she is *One*; in her faith, in her sacraments, in her members, and in her head. All the faithful, in every part of the globe, profess the same belief. What the Church teaches to-day, she always did, and always will teach. The faith, ~~my dear Theophilus~~, which is preached to ourselves, is preached at Rome, in Asia, in Africa, and in America. There is every where an uniformity; every where a profession of believing whatever the Deity has revealed, and the Church proposes, by the mouth of her pastors. This is an undeniable fact; a fact of public notoriety, and which the intercourse that subsists between the different quarters of the world, incontestably evinces. The faithful throughout the universe, partake likewise of the same sacraments. Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, and the other sacred rites, are administered to them every where; and every where these sacraments are received, as the means ordained by Christ for our sanctification and holiness. (The faithful also that are spread over the wide extent of the globe, have always among them a communication of prayers and spiritual advantages. Each member has a share in the prayers of his brethren. For which reason we say not, *give me this day my daily bread*, as praying for ourselves only; but *give us this day our daily bread*.—offering our petitions for the common necessities of all.) Finally, the faithful have all one and the same invisible head in heaven, who is Jesus Christ, our Lord; and one and the same visible head on earth, the successor of St. Peter, and the representative of Christ. Wherefore, to be a member of this Church, we must believe, as you may suppose, all that she teaches: whoever presumes to alter her doctrine, belongs not to the Church. We must participate in the same sacraments: whoever diminishes from, or adds to them, belongs not to the Church. We must be united to the body and society of the faithful, by a communication of spiritual blessings: therefore, those that are excommunicated, belong not to the Church. And lastly, we must pay obedience to our legitimate pastors: whoever refuses to acknowledge the Pope for the vicar of Jesus Christ, belongs not to the Church.

The second characteristic, that distinguishes the true Church from every other congregation, is that of *Holiness or Sanctity*. Not that each individual of her society is holy; but because she is the sole depository of the means of sanctification; because she alone produces saints; and because her invisible head, the fountain of all sanctity, perpetuates in her that nation of saints, which is destined to people the heavenly Jerusalem.

Thirdly, the true Church is *Catholic or Universal*; that is, she is under no limitation, either as to time or to place—an advantage that cannot be claimed by such as have separated from her. She embraces all times: for the Church has ever subsisted, without any interruption, and she will continue to subsist till the consummation of ages, according to the promise of her Divine Author. On the contrary, all other societies bear, as we may say, upon their front the marks of their novelty. We know the date of their rise. For instance, before the year of Christ, 1517, the Lutheran system did not exist; much less the many others that have since sprung from it. The Church includes all places. Her children and members inhabit every region of the earth; whereas, all other societies are more or less restricted; and the name of Catholic, which she has always been in possession of, is without hesitation, confirmed to her by the avowal of her strongest opponents.

Lastly, the fourth distinctive mark, that characterizes the true Church, is her being *Apostolical*: by which is meant, that she was founded by the Apostles, and is still governed by their successors: insomuch that there is no Catholic bishop, who does not receive his mission, and hold his authority from the apostles, or from those that the apostles originally delegated;—a succession descended to our days, without break or interruption. Other denominations, by forsaking the true Church, have deprived themselves of this succession: thus, the Lutherans cannot carry the origin of their claim beyond the time of their founder;—that is to say, to a date of three hundred and twenty years. The chain of their succession does not reach beyond that epoch. Whereas, Gregory XVI., the actual bishop of Rome, by an uninterrupted series of popes, to whom he has duly succeeded, can trace back his mission to the days of St. Peter, the head of the apostolical college.

By the features here traced, Theophilus, you will easily

discern and recognise your spiritual Mother. The true Church is visible, and within the reach of every eye: and we need but open ours, to discover and ascertain her. We see around us a society of men, who profess the same faith, who believe the same mysteries, who partake of the same sacraments, and who acknowledge the same authority, together with its divine origin, in her ministers and servants.

What thanks, O my God! do I not owe thee, for having made me a member of that Church, of which thou thyself art the head; and wherein thou hast placed the fountain of salvation. Thou hast brought me into that ark, which thou hast appointed for our refuge from the waters of the deluge. How much ought I to value this happiness, which to me is a source of infinite blessings! In this holy Church, I am fed with the bread of thy word; I am purified; I am sustained; I am sanctified with the sacraments, of which thou hast made her the depository. I partake of the prayers, which this pious mother offers to thee, in behalf of her children. I am conducted by pastors, whose voice if I follow, I shall never go astray. Thou hast withheld this grace, O Lord! from so many nations, that as yet know thee not; and from so many others, who having heretofore received thy faith, have now rejected and lost it. Divided from thy Church, they are deprived of spiritual life; and are withered, as branches lopped off from the trunk that gave them nourishment and vigour. Preserve me, O Lord! from this misfortune. Bind still closer the bonds, that attach me to thy Church. Give me a perfect docility to the pastors who govern her. In her bosom I became thy child; and in her bosom I desire to live and breathe my last. Thou wilt acknowledge me for thy child, while I own her for a mother, and obey her as such.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must thank Almighty God for having made us children of his Church.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH.

*And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, that henceforth we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. Ephes. iv. 11—14.*

JESUS CHRIST gave to the pastors of his Church the power of teaching, and of governing the faithful in the order of salvation. This authority is wholly spiritual, and resides only in the pastors, that is, in the Pope, who is the head of the universal Church, and in the bishops, as the inheritors and successors of the apostles. "Going, therefore," says Christ to the latter, "teach ye all nations;—teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."\* Here we find, my dear child, that our Lord charged his apostles and their successors to the end of time, to teach the world what he himself had taught them; that is to say, the mysteries of faith and the rules of morality. We see that he promised to assist them in the execution of this office, as long as the world should continue. By virtue of this promise, the Church is infallible in her doctrine, both as to faith and to morals. Having Jesus Christ with her, who is truth itself; being at all times enlightened and directed by his Spirit, which is the spirit of wisdom, she can never teach what is wrong. If she could, she would cease to be the Church of Christ, and to have his Spirit for her guide. Whence St. Paul justly styles her "the pillar and ground of truth."†

Hence let us draw this inference, Theophilus, that the body of our spiritual pastors can never err, or be deceived in what relates to faith and morality; and that the decisions which they form, whether tending to expose the different articles of faith, or to censure such errors, as combat its tenets, are infallible verdicts, which all the faithful must sub-

\* Math. xxviii. 19, 20.

† 1 Tim. iii. 15.

mit to. The Church is the chair of truth; the seat of God himself. In his name she speaks to men, and by his authoritative order. When we submit our understanding to the decisions of the Church, it is to God himself we render the homage of our faith. "He that heareth you," says Christ to his Apostles, "heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."\* "He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."† Upon this ground; the Apostles, acquainted with the privilege they had received from Jesus Christ, ushered in their first decree with these remarkable words; "It has seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us:"‡ to give us to understand that their judgment and determination was that of the Deity himself. In fact, it was necessary that Christ should impart to his Church this infallible authority. Was there not a tribunal, ultimately to resolve such questions as arise on matters of faith, we should be led astray by our conceptions; and there would be an end to uniformity and consistency of belief. Was not this tribunal infallible; its decisions might be suspected, and the faithful would remain in a wavering uncertainty, exposed to be tossed about by every wind of innovation. Wherefore, it became the wisdom of Christ to secure to his Church the privilege of being preserved from the imposition of errors.

Secondly, Jesus Christ has given to his pastors the power of governing the faithful; that is, of making laws for their rule of conduct, in what concerns the service of God and the regulation of good morals: and of inflicting spiritual penalties on the indocile and refractory. The New Testament is full of passages that inculcate this point. St. Paul, addressing himself to the elders of the Church of Ephesus, says; "Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the Church of God."§ Bishops are, therefore, appointed to govern the faithful. To resist their authority is to resist the Holy Ghost. The same apostle declares, in his epistle to the Corinthians, that he is empowered to punish the disobedient. And, in fact, he made use of this power, in the case of the scandalous Corinthian, whom, for a time, he cut off from the body of the Church, by a sentence of excommunication. This power of excom-

\* Luke x. 16.

† Acts xv. 28.

† Math. xviii. 17.

§ Acts xx. 28.



municating is comprehended in these words, which Christ addressed to his Apostles: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven."\* From these words, it has been always understood that the sentence, by which a pastor removes a sinner from the society of the faithful, will be ratified in heaven by the Son of God himself; and in like manner, when they release and re-admit him by absolution. Christ uses the words, *binding and unbinding*, because the excommunicated person, being delivered over to Satan, becomes his vassal and slave. He is fettered with his chains; nor can he otherwise be emancipated, than by the power, that bound him.

Respect then this authority, which is derived from God himself. Endeavour to acquire a knowledge of all the Church teaches, that you may subject your understanding to it; and of all she commands, that you may regulate your conduct by it. Her doctrine is ever true; her laws ever wise, and her morals ever holy.

Thou hast established pastors in thy Church, O God! for our instruction and government. Thou hast annexed to their precepts the privilege of infallibility, by promising to be with them to the end of the world; whereby thou hast prevented and settled all our doubts. It is thy will that all should come to the knowledge of the truth; and thou hast afforded an easy means, within the reach of all mankind, to discover it with certainty. Without this, we must have continued in a deplorable ignorance; or, at best, under a cruel incertitude, as to what it imports us most to know. What acknowledgments do we not owe thee, for having thus secured us against error, and all the anxiety of doubt! In adhering to thy Church, I am not afraid of going astray. When I hear her voice, my mind is at ease. Relying on thy promises, I believe, without demur, whatever she proposes; I reject, without hesitation, whatever she condemns. I am convinced, that in listening to her, it is thyself I listen to. Far from me be that spirit of pride, which makes us revolt against an authority, erected by thyself. Preserve me from such blindness. Teach me to respect, and to observe all her precepts; and make me, in every

\* Math. xviii. 18.

regard, obedient to the voice of this holy mother, whom thou hast appointed to conduct us in the way of salvation.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we must submit both our understanding and our will to the decisions of the Church.

---

## CHAPTER XXX.

### ON THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

*There are many members, yet one body.—That the members may be mutually careful one for another. You are the body of Christ and members of each member. 1. Cor. xii. 20, 25, 27.*

ALL the numerous believers, that compose the Christian Church, are united together, and form but one body, of which Christ is the head. Charity, the bond of this indissoluble union, produces among them a communication of all spiritual and religious advantages. And this, my Theophilus, is the meaning of those words, *the Communion of Saints*.

All the faithful are termed Saints: because they are all sanctified by baptism, and are all called to be holy. The spiritual blessings, that are common to them all, are the infinite merits of the sufferings of Christ, the intercession of the blessed Virgin and the Saints in heaven, the sacraments, the prayers and other good works that are performed in the Church. Of all these spiritual advantages a treasure is formed, that appertains to the whole body; of which each individual member has his share, according to the disposition and state he is in. Is he in a state of grace? He then partakes fully of all the blessings and advantages, that are collected in the Church. Is he under the guilt of mortal sin? He at least obtains help to withdraw him from that wretched state. This communion in religious blessings is the necessary consequence of the unity of the Church; in which, as in a family, all work for the com-

**mon interest, and all proportionably partake of the fruits of the common labour.**

St. Paul compares the Church to a human body; and nothing, in fact, can give us a more just idea of the *Communion of Saints*. The body is composed of many members; and each of these members has its particular stated office. They have all one common head, one common soul, one common life; and altogether make but one body. The functions of each member, as well as its advantages, are for the good of the whole: all concur to the same end, viz. the welfare of the body. The eyes see, the ears hear, the hands act, the feet walk for the rest of the frame. In a word, all the members contribute to the good of one another, and afford each other assistance under their respective demands. In like manner, in the Church, the faithful, animated by the same spirit, and living under the same head, are united with each other in all their different actions. Each individual of them prays, works and merits for the common good of the whole: and at the same time, he has his share in the labours, in the virtues and in the supplications of the Church at large. And as all her children work and pray for one another, sharing each others merits by a mutual participation: so she offers the common vietim, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, for the general good of all, wherever it is immolated.

But to profit by these advantages, one must be a member of the Church. Those, that have separated themselves from her, by rejecting her creed; and such, as she has thrown from her bosom by a sentence of excommunication, have no part in the blessings, which this communion affords. Nay, to enjoy them completely, one must be a living member of the Church; that is, in a state of grace, as we term it, with a conscience undefiled by the guilt of mortal sin. Sinners, in whom the Holy Ghost does not reside by sanctifying grace, are indeed members of the Church; but they are dead members: and if so, how can they pretend to equal advantages with the living? A dead arm though still unseparated from the human body, can receive neither nourishment nor motion from such connexion. Nevertheless, sinners fail not to draw great advantages from this union. For they still belong to a society, where truth, charity, salvation and the means conducting to it are undoubtedly to be found. A sinner, it is true, is dead, but while united to the body of the Church, he may be restored

to life by the aid of her prayers; and she never ceases to beg for him this inestimable blessing.

But besides this union of the faithful upon earth, there is another union, still more general, between the Saints reigning in heaven, the souls suffering in purgatory, and the Church militant in this world. We rejoice at the happiness of the Saints in glory, we join with them in blessing God for it, and we beg their intercession, at the throne of mercy, where they stand. On their side, they love us as their brethren, and assist us by their prayers. We communicate with the souls in purgatory, by offering up our supplications, our alms, our good works, to obtain comfort for them under their sufferings and a diminution of their pains.

How great, O Lord! are the advantages, how desirable the blessings, which thy servants enjoy in the bosom of thy Church! The close connexion among them, renders these common to all. He that is rich, shares his abundance with the more needy and indigent. He that is strong, shares his power with the feeble and weak. Nothing more encouraging to me, than this consolatory thought. I should be much to be pitied, had I only my own good works to present to thee. But all holy souls pray for me, and do penance for me: their meritorious actions are all mine: the gifts of thy Spirit, which they possess, belong to me: the fervour of their prayers supplies the tepidity of mine: the solidity of their virtue compensates my levity. Moved with the mournful sighs, which their charity addresses to thee in my behalf, thou wilt grant me, O God! an increase of thy grace. These spiritual riches I value more than all the treasures of the world. Suffer me not to lose the smallest part of them by neglect. But on the contrary, enable me to draw every possible advantage from them, by a constant attention to preserve myself in thy grace.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we ought to esteem ourselves happy in being partakers of the spiritual riches and blessings of the Church.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## ON THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

*Through him (Jesus Christ,) forgiveness of sins is preached unto you. Acts xiii. 38.*

THE Catholic Church alone affords us this solid comfort of the remission of our sins. God grants this grace to those only who are children by baptism. None who are out of the pale of the Church, such as infidels, who have not been received into it, or the refractory and excommunicated, who, through their misconduct, are justly expelled it, can have any share in this invaluable blessing, while they continue in that state. As for you, my dear Theophilus, you enjoy this advantage.

You have already received, at your baptism, the forgiveness of original sin, in which we are all born. But the mercy of God is not confined to this. As it happens, and that alas! too generally, that we soon forfeit the innocence, acquired by baptism, he has instituted a sacrament, to wash away the sins, we commit after that period, viz. the sacrament of Penance. To this we may have recourse as often as we have occasion. God is, at all times, disposed to forgive our sins, provided we approach this sacrament with sincere contrition for them. Neither is there any sin so enormous, but it may thus be happily effaced. Although you were guilty of the most atrocious crimes; although the number of them surpassed that of the hairs of your head, you might still obtain the pardon of them by the sacrament of Penance.

But we are not to imagine that this forgiveness of sin is the consequence of our own merits. It is to be attributed to those of Christ only, our Mediator and Saviour. The promise of God to remit our guilt is the pure effect of his mercy; and this promise is the sole resource and refuge of sinners, and the ground of their confidence. You must be sensible, my child, that God alone can forgive sin. When the priest, therefore, pronounces over you the sentence of absolution, it is God, that absolves you, by the agency of his minister. The priest is but the instrument, which the Deity employs to,

produce this great effect. He acts in the name of God, and by the virtue of a power received from above. "Let a man so account of us," says St. Paul, "as the ministers of Christ, and dispensers of the mysteries of God."\*

That the Almighty has imparted this power to the pastors of his Church is evident from the words which Jesus Christ addressed to his Apostles, and to their successors in the apostolic ministry; "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."† Hence, it is obvious that our Saviour communicated to his Apostles the power to remit every kind of sin; and that he promised to ratify in heaven the sentence which they should pronounce upon earth. From the Apostles this privilege passed to the bishops and to the priests, deputed by them, for the administration of the sacred office. What price you ought to set upon this signal blessing you would easily comprehend, did you but reflect on the state of those, who, having offended the Deity, should have no resource or means to effect their reconciliation. On this head, I will tell you what a person, engaged from his infancy in the heresy of Calvin, said to a Catholic, to whom he opened his heart. The former, in a conversation on this subject, thus addressed himself to the latter. "How happy, my friend, are you in the tenets of your belief. When one has been so unfortunate as to offend the Deity, one readily finds the means of appeasing a troubled conscience. If one repent of the crime committed, and confess it, the sin is forgiven; and peace of mind succeeds to remorse and disquietude. But with us, this consolation is unknown: one is compelled to bear for life the heavy weight of one's guilt. I own to you the sins of my youth have never ceased to oppress me. The remembrance of those sins, which have not been effaced, haunts me every where, and has hitherto embittered all the comforts of life, since I have nothing to afford me any confidence of pardon."

Learn from this, Theophilus, the high advantages a soul possesses, when she has in her power the means of reconciliation. What a satisfaction to be able to say to herself: It is true that I have sinned, and have deserved hell: but through the mercy of God, I am now absolved from my crimes, and have reason to hope that they are effaced and forgiven. Be

\* 1 Cor. iv. 1.

† John xx. 22, 23.

cautious, however, not to abuse the divine goodness; nor to take from thence occasion of sinning more freely. What! Will you offend your God, because he is disposed to pardon you? Will you be wicked, because he is infinitely kind? Be not deceived. This abuse of God's mercy is the crime that most irritates him: and this same Deity, who forgives all that apply rightly disposed to the sacrament of Penance, may, perhaps, cut you off in your sins, without allowing you time for repentance. How many young people have been surprised in their sins! And what assurance have you that you will not meet with the like fate?

How unhappy, O God, should I be, were I to suffer passion so far to prevail over me, as to abandon myself to sin, in the hope of confessing and obtaining forgiveness. I will remember thy mercy: and how, indeed, can I forget it, after so frequently experiencing its tender effects! I will remember thy mercy, to animate myself to serve thee with greater fidelity; and not to offend thee with a more audacious assurance. Yes, O Lord! thy mercy is infinite. How often hast thou shown it, in regard to me! What an accumulation of crimes hast thou not repeatedly pardoned me! Thou mightest have abandoned me to the rigour of thy justice. But thou hast had compassion on me, O my God! Thou didst seek me, thou didst recall me; and when I returned to thee, thou didst receive me with the affection of a parent, and overlooked my misconduct. I will remember thy mercy, to bless and not to abuse it. I will remember it, to call to mind what a value thou hast hitherto, and dost still, set upon my soul. I will remember it, to learn how much I am indebted to thy love. Such, O gracious God! ought to be the sentiments of my heart, at the sight of thy mercy; and such shall be the reflections, with which it shall in future inspire me.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should praise the divine goodness, for having afforded us the means of effacing our sins.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

*Behold, I will open your graves, and bring you out of your sepulchres.* Ezech. xxxvii. 12.

THE future resurrection of our bodies is an article of faith. All mankind shall die; and shall rise again in the selfsame bodies, as those in which they lived. These bodies, put under ground, shall experience corruption, and be reduced to their native dust. But whatever changes they may undergo, their ashes shall be again united, and reanimated by the quickening spirit and breath of the Almighty.

There is no point of the Christian belief more plainly delivered in the sacred writings, or more firmly supported by the faith of all ages, than the one now before us. It is a truth that always has been known. The holy Job, contemporary with the primitive Patriarchs, professes this belief. "I know," he says, "that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed with my skin; and in my flesh I shall see my God; whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."\* But it is principally in the New Testament that this truth is clearly illustrated. "The hour cometh," says Christ, "wherein all that are in their graves, shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."† "In a moment," says St. Paul, "in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, the dead shall arise again incorruptible."‡ As all incurred death by one man, Adam; so shall all rise again, through one sole man, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

This resurrection shall be general. All, great and little, good and bad; they that have lived before us, even from the beginning of the world, they that at present are living, and they that shall live after us, all alike shall die and rise again at the last day, in the very same bodies they had at their dissolution. The omnipotence of the Deity will effect this

\* Job xix. 25, 26, 27.

† John v. 28, 29.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 52.



miracle; who, as he originally made whatever is out of nothing, will easily bring together our dispersed and scattered limbs, and reunite them to our souls. For it cannot be more difficult to the infinite power of God to restore our bodies to life, than it was to create and vivify them at first. An image of this resurrection we have every year before our eyes. Are not the trees, in appearance, dead during the season of winter? And do they not seem to come to life again with the returning spring? Seeds of every sort, that are buried in the earth, corrupt there and die: yet they shoot forth again more beautiful than before. It is the same with the human body; which is as a kind of seed, that is sown and springs up afresh, renewed and invigorated.

The bodies of the just, shall be no longer as at present, material and gross. They shall shine like the sun. They shall be exempt from all sufferings and the shadow of pain: they shall be active and strong, as the body of our Redeemer, when risen from the tomb. The virtuous, who are his children, sanctified by grace, and incorporated with him by faith, shall rise in a manner similar to him. Jesus Christ will transform their abject and lowly bodies; and render them like to his own, impassible and glorious. The body, that partook of the good which the soul performed, while united with it, shall also partake of its happiness. The wicked shall likewise rise; but their bodies shall not participate in those excellent qualities. They shall rise; but shall not be altered, like the body of Christ. They shall rise; but to torments, eternal in their duration, and inconceivable in their nature. The immortality of their bodies, shall only serve to render their punishment everlasting, and their wretchedness irremediable. "And many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth," says the Prophet Daniel, "shall awake; some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always."\*

What a sight shall we then behold! What will be your sentiments, when the thrilling sound of the trumpet shall re-echo on all sides; "Arise ye dead and come to judgment:" when you shall see all mankind appear, without any other distinction, than that of their former works and actions! St. Jerom, in the deep recess of a wild and lonely desert, imagined he heard perpetually the shrill accents of this last trumpet, and his inmost soul shrunk with horror and dread. How

\* Dan. xii. 2.

much more reason have we ourselves to fear it! How can we be at our ease? If the future resurrection of the body be an object of hope and consolation for the just, it is no less an object of terror and dismay for sinners. To which class do we belong?

According to the expression of thy sacred writers, O God! death is no more than a sleep. My body will one day be crumbled into dust; but, after a temporary repose in the grave, it will arise again. It will arise; no longer, as at present, clothed with infirmity and weakness; but vested with splendour, impassibility, and immortality. This, I hope, O Lord! from thy mercy; and this hope, which I cherish, is my support and consolation against the terrors of death. Nature, indeed, apprehends this passage from time to eternity; but the belief of a resurrection revives and sustains me. Thou didst create man immortal; and had he but been faithful to thee, he would never have tasted death. It is natural for him to dread a state that he ought not to have known: but death is the punishment of his sin. Nevertheless, thou hast greatly mitigated this punishment, by dying thyself to expiate our crimes; and by rising again, to give us a pledge of our own resurrection. Thou hast said of thyself, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live."\* Thou art my *life*, O God! for of thee I hold my existence. Thou art my *resurrection*: for it is by thee this mortal body shall hereafter be clothed with a blissful immortality. I believe in thee. I shall therefore be restored once more to life; after suffering the stroke of death, to which all are condemned. I shall be restored to life, to die no more; but to reign throughout eternity with thee, my Sovereign Good!

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should console ourselves under the afflictions of the body with the hopes of its resurrection.

\* John xi. 25.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## ON THE FUTURE STATE OF LIFE EVERLASTING.

*These (the wicked) shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting. Math. xxv. 46.*

THE Soul, my dear Theophilus never dies. At the moment of dissolution it is, indeed, separated from the body; but still it does not die. Immortal in its nature, it passes from this life to another; from this visible and material world, to an invisible and spiritual world. The heathens themselves believed in a future state, in which all were to be treated according to their works. The expectation of a life to come, says Tertullian, is the faith of mankind, and the doctrine of nature.

There is another life, therefore, after the present; and this second life shall have no end. We shall there be eternally either happy or miserable, according to our dispositions at the hour of death. The virtuous soul, on its quitting the body, shall be received into the company of the blessed in heaven, there, with them, to enjoy the presence of the Deity. "We see now," says St. Paul, "through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know him even as I am known."\* "We know," says St. John, "that when he shall appear, we shall be like to him; because we shall see him as he is."† To behold the Deity,—to possess him, is the greatest happiness; since he is the Sovereign Good, the fountain and plenitude of every perfection. This happiness surpasses not only our utterance, but our warmest conceptions. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."‡ They shall be filled with good things of the house of the Lord, and inebriated with the torrent of his unspeakable delights. For ever they shall love God, and for ever be loved by him: and this love will be the source of incomprehensible joy. After the general resurrection, their bodies shall likewise have part in this immense felicity. No longer shall there be grief, nor

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

† 1 John iii. 2.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

cause for lamentation; for the first state shall have passed away. They shall know neither hunger nor thirst: nor shall the scorching sun nor parching winds any more incommode them: and God himself shall dry up their tears. Death shall be no more, nor the obscurity of night; for the brightness of the Lord shall eternally illumine them. Such, my dear child, will be the portion of the elect.

On the other hand, the reprobate soul, at the instant of death, shall be plunged into hell, where, for ever separated from God, and without any hope of escape, it shall burn with the devils in unquenchable flames. It shall constantly be yearning with the most painful regret, after its God, whom it shall then know to be its Sovereign good, and shall be as constantly disappointed. The Lord, who is at present so merciful and kind, shall then be an irritated and inflexible avenger. An irrevocable curse and a bottomless abyss shall eternally exclude the guilty soul from the heavenly Jerusalem: while the most frightful despair shall harrow up her vitals, and increase every instant, her torments and misery. The bodies of the reprobate shall rise, it is true. But their resurrection shall serve only to augment their calamity, and to consummate their wretchedness. Immersed in the fiery gulf, they shall be immortal to no other purpose, than to suffer eternally. They shall burn without being consumed; the objects of Almighty vengeance, which they can neither elude nor appease. Bitter and fruitless tears, gnashing of teeth and raging horror shall be their lot for all eternity. "Their worm shall die not" says Christ, "and the fire is not extinguished."\* What a picture, Theophilus! Can you behold it without shuddering? And yet nothing is more true. It is Jesus Christ who has drawn it. It would be arraigning truth itself, to suspect exaggeration in the words in which he has described it; and they are, moreover, so clear and expressive, as not to be obscured. It is he who is to pronounce this awful sentence "Depart from me, you cursed into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels."† It is he, who informs us of the unavailing lamentations and the gnashing of teeth.

It is he who discovers to us the insurmountable abyss, that divides Dives from Lazarus; and who makes Abraham refuse to the former a single drop of water to cool his parched tongue. It is he who acquaints us that the fire of hell shall not be extin-

\* Mark ix. 47.

† Math. xxv. 41.

guished, nor the worm of conscience ever die. While we hear him say all this, what can we do but tremble? Ought not such terrific menaces, from the mouth of truth itself, to awaken from their lethargy, those who have a spark of faith left?

I understand, my God! why, in the Scripture, thou so often remindest me of the goods and evils of futurity,—of that state, where virtue shall be immeasurably rewarded, and vice punished without mercy or compassion. It is because the goods of this world are nothing, comparatively with what thou hast prepared for thy servants. It is because the evils, to which we are here exposed bear no proportion to the sufferings, with which thou dost threaten the wicked. Thou wishest us to despise this life, which passes like a dream, and to aspire to the life to come, which shall never have an end. The time we spend here, is a time of trial and probation. If we be faithful to thy commands we are assured of a happy futurity. If, on the contrary, we be disobedient to them, we are threatened with eternal woes. Pierce, O God! my heart with a dread of hell-fire, that this salutary fear may restrain me from sin. Inspire me with a love of heaven, that may support and uphold me in the practice of virtue. Let me never forget that this present life is granted me only to merit another, in which I am destined to live for a boundless eternity.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should often reflect that we have a hell to avoid, and a heaven to gain.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

## PART II.

### THE DUTIES OF RELIGION.

---

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

##### ON FAITH.

*Ye, that fear the Lord, believe him.* Eccles. ii. 8.

THE first obligation, God imposes on man, is faith: and this obligation is implied in those words of the great commandment: "The Lord, thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve."\* Faith consists in believing, without hesitation, all the truths that God has revealed, and which the Church, on his part, proposes to our assent. These truths are contained in the Scriptures and in Tradition. By the *Scriptures* we mean the sacred volumes, dictated by the Holy Ghost, and penned by his direction; and of these there are two sorts, the Old and the New Testament. By *Tradition* we understand the ordinances of God, not *written* by inspired authors, but *taught by word of mouth*, and transmitted down to our days by the public teaching of the Church.

The grand deposit of the Scriptures and Tradition is entrusted to the Church. It is she that decides, and marks out the true sense which she proposes to the faithful by an infallible judgment and a sovereign authority. God has given her this power: he has promised to preserve her from error, and to guide her in the path of truth, to the end of the world. It is our duty, therefore, to believe whatever she teaches; nor is there a ray of hope for him, who is destitute of faith. On this head, the word of Christ is positive. "He that believeth,

\* Deut. vi. 13.

and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned.”\*—“Without faith,” says the Apostle, “it is impossible to please God.”† The council of Trent styles faith the first step to salvation, the groundwork and root of justification and merit. You here see the indispensable necessity of faith. Faith does honour to God, and pays him the tribute due to him, as the Sovereign Truth. It is, in the language of St. Paul, a sacrifice that we make to him; by subjecting our understanding to his infallible word, and imposing silence on our doubts and prejudices, to believe without demur, on the authority of his veracity, what our senses do not perceive, nor our comprehension attain to.

But is it possible to believe what one neither sees, nor comprehends? Yes, my dear Theophilus, you daily believe things, that you never have seen. Let a person, of whom you have a favourable opinion, tell you of a matter of fact, which he has witnessed himself, you will not hesitate to credit him. And does not the testimony of God deserve your credit far more, than the assurance of man? But the principles of faith, you say, are above comprehension. That they are so I admit. But how many things are there, even in the order of nature, that we do not comprehend? Can you conceive how a seed, that is buried in the earth, should produce a plant or a flower? Certainly, you cannot: and yet you believe it. With how much more reason ought you readily to believe what God has revealed? For being the Sovereign Truth, we are sure that he can neither be deceived himself, nor impose upon us. Wherefore, to believe what even we do not comprehend, on the authority of God’s word, is most consonant to reason. For we believe, not because we comprehend, but because the unerring Truth has spoken: and faith is then built on the veracity of God, and not on any light or understanding of our own.

Revelation alone could give us an idea of the mysteries of religion, and with this God has favoured us. He has done still more. For he has established a supreme, an unerring authority, to propose them to us. As he calls all mankind to the knowledge of the truth, he has furnished a method of discovering it, within the reach of every one. Docility alone is required to be a Christian; a docility, which is, by no means, a blind credulity; but a submission, grounded on the strongest motives, and on principles sufficient to determine,

\* Mark xvi. 16.

† Heb. xi. 6.

at a look, any reasonable person. But how do we know that God has spoken? We know it by all the proofs, that sustain Christianity. We know it by public and authentic documents, and principally by miracles. "Jesus Christ," says St. Austin, "required faith from mankind. But before he required it, he deserved it by his miracles." This proof he held up to the Jews. "The works that I do," he says, "in the name of my Father, they give testimony of me.—If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you will not believe me, believe the works."\* Miracles, then, are the voice of God; and a doctrine founded on them, cannot be rejected without the imputation of impiety.

On these grounds, therefore, believe all the articles of your faith; for to reject any one of them is inconsistent with this duty. Believe them firmly, that is, without doubt or hesitation; for these cannot be admitted, without offending against faith. And, for this reason, be extremely cautious of reading any such writings, as militate against religion in general, or against those principles of orthodoxy, in which you have been so carefully tutored. There is danger in the attempt; and "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it."† We should also offend against faith, if the fear of the world ever induced us to renounce it exteriorly; though, at the same time, we might flatter ourselves that we retained it at heart. The martyrs preferred suffering every species of torments, even death itself, rather than dissemble their faith in the face of their persecutors. Finally, it is offending against faith to neglect to procure instructions upon any of those articles, of which the knowledge and acquaintance are requisite to salvation. Through this culpable neglect, many live in the ignorance of what it is incumbent on them to know, and commit numberless faults, of which they are wholly unconscious.

O my God! I believe all thy mysteries, which it has pleased thee to reveal. I hope ever to continue docile, to the voice of the Church, which thou thyself dost conduct, and enlighten by thy Holy Spirit. However impenetrable the truths, which thou dost propose to my belief, I believe them firmly; for though I do not comprehend them, yet I know thou hast revealed them, and that is sufficient. Far from me the presumption, that dares to subject thy infallible word to the

\* John x. 25, 37, 38.

† Eccl. iii. 27.



scrutiny of erring reason. Far from me the curiosity of reading such productions as might sap the foundation of my faith. Thou hast spoken, O Lord! The only part for me to take is to silence my erring judgment: and to submit both that and the evidence of my senses to thy sacred veracity. I believe at present without comprehending; but the time will come, at least I hope it of thy mercy, when I shall be admitted into thy sanctuary, where truth shall shine conspicuous, and where the obscurity of faith shall give place to unclouded brilliancy. It is thy will that during this life we should be content to be guided by the light of revelation: and this thou hast ordained that we might have the merit of faith. Strengthen this faith in me; and guard it against the snares, that beset it on every side. Make me solicitous to avoid whatever may tend to weaken it; and never suffer me to lose so important a treasure.

*The Praetical Inference.*

That we should frequently make acts of Faith.

---

CHAPTER XXXV.

ON HOPE.

*Ye, that fear the Lord, hope in him. Eccles. ii. 9.*

THE second obligation which man owes to God, is hope; that is, to expect with a firm confidence of his infinite mercy, the blessings he has promised. These blessings are eternal salvation, and the graces we stand in need of, to conduct us to it. How valuable are these blessings! What a happiness do they ensure us! Nothing less than the sight and possession of God himself. A happiness infinitely superior to our feeble exertions, and owing entirely to his ineffable mercy.

Of ourselves, we are incapable of meriting such a bliss. But God, who loves us, notwithstanding our unworthiness, has promised to grant the assistance of his grace, to bring us to it. He has given his only Son, that "Whosoever

believeth in him, may not perish; but may have life everlasting.”\* The view of our misery may not prevent us from trusting in God, and from expecting the good things that he has graciously promised. His omnipotence, to which nothing is impossible; his mercy, which is uncircumscribed; the gift he has made us of his Son; his grace, his promises, and his command to confide in them through the merits of Christ, these are the strong foundations of the Christian’s hope. With such motives of confidence, not to place our trust in him would be to offer him an insult. The Almighty, who would have us believe in him, when he speaks, would also have us hope in him, when he promises.

Hope is no less necessary to salvation, than faith itself, “Trust in the Lord,” says the Prophet, “and do good.”† The Apostle enjoins on us not only to be strong in faith, but also constant in the hope, which is afforded us by the Gospel; for he adds, “we are saved by hope.”‡ He would have a Christian, in the very midst of adversity, hold up his head undauntedly, in the assurance of belonging to the family of God; fully persuaded his hope will not be frustrated. But observe, Theophilus; our hope must be firm and unalterably constant. The hope of a Christian must not be unsettled. It must be stable and fixed; because resting on a solid, an immoveable basis. St. Paul compares it to the anchor of a ship, which keeps the vessel steady amidst the tossing of the foaming billows. Nor will this hope be ever confounded, while it continues humble and resolute. The Almighty cannot be faithless. “Heaven and earth shall pass; but my word shall not pass.”§ No one ever hoped in him, that did not experience his protection. It is true that, in this life, hope is always blended with fear; and God permits this, in order to keep us in a state of humility and diffidence. But this fear and incertitude are not the result of any supposed deficiency on the part of the Deity: for he is rich in mercy, and faithful to his word. They proceed wholly from ourselves. We are assured, indeed, that if we place our confidence in God, he will give us what he has promised: but we have reason to apprehend lest we ourselves obstruct the communication of his grace.

Two opposite vices militate against this virtue of hope; on

\* John iii. 16.

† Rom. viii. 24.

‡ Ps. xxxvi. 3.

§ Math. xxiv. 35.

the one side despair, and on the other presumption. We should sin against hope, if, despairing of salvation, we should continue in a state of impenitence, without endeavouring to extricate ourselves. Such was the crime of Cain, who having murdered his brother, said; "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon."\* Despair is a sin of the blackest die in the eyes of God; because it insults his mercy, the attribute, which, of all others, he most delights to show us, and to which he most desires we should render our homage, by an unlimited confidence. In fact, however enormous our crimes, still the divine justice exceeds them, in an infinite degree; nor is there a sin, that our Redeemer has not expiated by his death, and of which he has not merited the fullest forgiveness. If then, unfortunately, you fall into sin, despair not of God's mercy. He is an affectionate Father, who only desires the return of his child. Your repentance will awaken all his compassion and tenderness. But dread to abuse his patience, by a criminal design to offend him more freely, or to persevere with audacity in your disorderly ways.

We should likewise sin against hope, if, presuming on the divine mercy, or on the strength of our own sufficiency, we should delay our conversion. Such is the crime of those who, from a wrong notion of God's goodness, imagine they shall be saved, without forsaking their sins: or who, on the confidence of a long life, persuade themselves it will be enough to think of salvation, when their years begin to decline. How many young people have been deceived by this delusion! They reckoned upon a time to come, when, alas! it was decreed there should be no such time for them. Avoid this snare; and postpone not your determination of consecrating yourself to God. The term of your life is uncertain. No age is secure from the iron grasp of death.

Happy, O God! is the man that relies on thee. He will surely find the accomplishment of thy infallible promises. I hope, dear Lord! that thou wilt save me by thy grace; I trust not to my own endeavours: for these, I know, would be but a feeble ground of hope. It is on thy mercy, that I depend, and the merits of my Saviour. Through these I hope for every thing; both eternal salvation, and the means to attain it. Thou art infinitely good. Thou hast given us thy beloved Son. After this, what canst thou refuse us? If ever

\* Gen. iv. 13.

I should be tempted to despair, a look at the cross would remove my distrust: and provided I abuse not thy mercy, by continuing in sin, this hope will bring me safe to the term of salvation. I will not be disheartened by the perils I am exposed to; for thou canst easily rescue me. No my God! never wilt thou forsake him who puts his trust in thee. Because he does so, thou wilt be his support. Thou art faithful to thy promises, and thy word shall be accomplished.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should frequently make acts of hope.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ON CHARITY.

*Ye that fear the Lord, love him.* Eccles. ii. 10.

“Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength.”\* Such is the command delivered by Moses, in the name of the Divinity, and renewed with Jesus Christ, in the pages of his Gospel. We are therefore informed that a doctor of the Jewish law, having proposed to him this question; “Which is the greatest commandment?” received this answer; “Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, &c. This is the first and greatest commandment.”

Was it then necessary, Theophilus, that God should command us to love him? Is he not in himself sovereignly amiable? His own infinite perfections, his goodness in our regard, the favours he heaps upon us, the advantages of adhering to him, do not all these considerations demand our affection? He created us; he preserves us; he feeds us. The heavens, the earth, the immense variety of creatures, which he has made for our service, unanimously challenge our most grateful attachment. But, in the order of grace, God has

\* Deut. vi. 5.—Math. xxii. 37, 38.

done still infinitely more for us. He has given his beloved Son, as a sacrifice for our redemption. Every instant of our lives he supports us by his grace. He has prepared for us in heaven, an immeasurable happiness. Is not this sufficient to win our heart? For this is the sole return he demands, for such numberless favours. "My son," he says, "give me thy heart."\* Can you then refuse him what he asks for? Can you be insensible to all his tenderness? Is not your heart, which he requires, his own, by the claims of justice? Did he not give it to you? And wherefore, but that you might love him? Can it be necessary to prove to a child that he is bound to love his father? Is not this sentiment natural to man? Have you not often felt the pleasure, which the presence of a father, or even the recollection of him brings? And is not God your father? Is there any one, to whom this name may be more justly applied? Was there ever a more affectionate parent? To all these motives add the delight that is found in this sacred love. What a pure and unmixed joy, what a sweet satisfaction is the portion of that breast, which is inflamed with the love of God! The pleasures of the world can afford nothing equivalent to those exquisite feelings, that attend divine love.

Attach yourself then to God. Give him your heart, before sin has made it unworthy of his acceptance. It is the love of him only that can render you happy; and the more ardent this is, the more happy will you be. Yes: God alone is our Sovereign Good. The man who is separated from him, is miserable in the midst of riches, of honours and of pleasures; something is always wanting to him, and never is he content. But he who loves his God, finds such consolations therein, as compensate all deficiencies. His desires are satisfied; his heart is at ease; nor can any thing ruffle the peace of his mind. Even in indigence he is rich; in humiliations great; in sufferings happy. If you doubt it, hear the Apostle: "we glory also in tribulations."† Behold the eagerness, with which the martyrs ran to meet the most cruel torments. Try it yourself; and learn by experience how sweet the Lord is to them, that love him sincerely.

But how are we to love God? Will a languid, will a divided, will a sterile love suffice to fulfil this obligation? No. You must love the Lord, your God, "with your whole heart,

\* Prov. xxiii. 26.

† Rom. v. 3.

with your whole soul, with your whole strength." God will have your affections entirely to himself. You must, therefore, prefer him to all creatures. You must be willing rather to lose every thing than his grace. In fine, you must love nothing, but with regard and relation to him. It is, then, transgressing this commandment to make any object but God, your Sovereign good, as the ambitious man does honour, the covetous, wealth, the voluptuous, pleasure. Moreover, the love of God must be active. "If any one love me," says Christ, "he will keep my word."\* It is not enough, then, to say you love God. Words are not sufficient: there must also be works. The love of God cannot be idle. It is like a fire, ever in motion. Where it produces no effects, there is reason to believe that it is extinct.

Infuse in my heart, O God! this celestial charity. Kindle in it that holy fire, which thou didst bring with thee from heaven. Thou hast made this heart, not to love creatures, but to attach it to thyself. What but thee can I find, that deserves my affections? Yes, I perceive that my heart will for ever be uneasy, till it rests in thee. I covet neither riches, nor aught else the world can give me. Thee only I desire, my God! Thou alone canst determine whether I love thee or not, and in what degree. All I know is, that I wish to love thee; to love thee fervently; to love thee solely, and to love thee for ever. If my love is still cold, animate it; and render it more forcible than the seductive charms of pleasure, more potent than the fear of pain, or the horrors of death. May it influence me here to an exact observance of thy commands: and may I hereafter receive its reward in loving thee eternally.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should frequently make acts of Charity.

\* John. xiv. 23.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## ON THE ADORATION DUE TO GOD.

*Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; and shalt serve him only.* Deut. vi. 13.

THE next obligation, comprised in the first commandment, is that of adoring the Deity; that is to say, of paying him the homage, to which he is entitled, as the Sovereign Lord of all things. Adoration is a profound humiliation of the soul, before the Supreme Majesty; before him, who created the heavens and the earth; who alone is great, who alone is powerful, who alone is formidable: before the Most High, who inhabits light inaccessible, and who alone possesses immortality in himself. In his presence, says the Prophet, all the nations of the globe are no more than a drop of water; and the earth itself but as a grain of sand. At the sight of his infinite perfections, the abashed soul annihilates herself: she makes an humble avowal of her dependence: she glorifies his holy name: she returns him thanks for all his favours, and begs respectfully for what she wants more, and what she expects from him alone: she offers herself, without reserve, to accomplish his will, and becomes wholly resigned to the dispensations of his providence.

These internal sentiments discover themselves outwardly by corresponding actions; by genuflexion, by prayer, and most especially by the sacrifice of the Mass,—of all the various acts of worship the most august and most excellent. It is your duty, then, Theophilus, to pay to God daily, and that chiefly in the morning and evening, the tribute of praise and adoration. By this religious exercise, you should begin and end the day. Fail not, therefore, to discharge an obligation so essential. Give your first thoughts to him, who created you, who preserves you, and who loads you daily with fresh blessings and favours. “The wise man,” says the Scripture, “will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him; and will pray in the sight of the most High.”\*

Then let your first action be to prostrate yourself at the

\* Ecclesi. xxxix. 6.

feet of his Sovereign Majesty, to consecrate yourself to his service, and to beg of him the graces of which you stand in need for your conduct. Make it your rule to assist, as often as possible, at the sacrifice of the altar; the best means of sanctifying the remainder of the day. Before and after meals, return thanks to this generous Father, who opens his hand, and fills his children with benedictions. Never let shame deter you from this laudable practice. Does a child blush to testify his acknowledgments to a father, whenever he receives from him new proofs of his kindness? At the close of day, renew that homage to God, with which you began it. Humble yourself then in his presence, at the view of your failings during the course of the preceding day. Crave his forgiveness, and thank him for all favours. But remember that the form of prayer, and whatever other external acts, are but the outward part religion. The soul of it are the internal sentiments of the mind, and the adoration of the heart. If these be wanting, words and exterior gestures can never please the Deity. They will only draw upon us the reproach, which he formerly made to the Jews: "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips glorify me, but their heart is far from me."\* God is a spirit; and requires to be adored in spirit and in truth.

Adoration is a kind of homage, that belongs only to the Supreme Being. We honour, if you will, the Saints; but we adore them not. We reverence and respect them, as the servants and friends of God: but we do not render them that worship, which is due to him alone. It is proper and advantageous to invoke their intercession; that, through their assistance, we may obtain of the Almighty the relief of our wants. But it is of God solely that we petition it; in the name of Jesus Christ, the common Saviour of all; who alone has merited for us, by his sufferings and death, whatever grace we can receive. We also honour the relics of the Saints, as the precious remnants of bodies that have been the temples of the Holy Ghost, and which shall one day, be resuscitated in glory: and in so doing, we do but copy the examples of preceding ages. The Catholic Church has ever regarded with an eye of religious veneration the bodies of the Saints. Of this we have a remarkable instance in a letter, wherein the faithful of Smyrna relate the martyrdom of St. Polycarp, their

\* Is. xxix. 13.



beloved bishop. "We saved," they say, "his bones, more precious to us than jewels, and we deposited them in a proper place; where we hope, in God, to meet to celebrate his martyrdom." Again, we honour their pictures, but this honour is referred to the object they represent. We know no virtue they possess, but that of reminding us of those, whose resemblance they are supposed to bear. In kneeling before the image of Christ, or the picture of a Saint, it is Christ himself that we adore, it is the Saints in heaven whom we honour.

Every instant of my life, O God! ought to be employed in adoring thee; because there is not one, but what is marked with some proof of thy benevolence. Yet thou art pleased to be satisfied with a few acts of religious worship, expressive of my daily gratitude. How censurable should I be, could I fail to render thee this small tribute! No, my God! I will never neglect a duty so essential and so easy. The first moments of the day shall be consecrated to thee. In the morning, prostrate at the feet of thy infinite Majesty, I will adore, I will praise thee, and offer thee all my actions. I will endeavour to sanctify my works and meals, by beginning and concluding them with raising up my mind to thee. At night, before I presume to take my rest, I will recall the sins of the day, to efface them by repentance; and the favours, conferred upon me, to bless thy mercy for them. Permit me not carelessly to acquit myself of these duties. Animate me with the spirit of fervour, that I may discharge them in such a manner, as may be worthy of thee, and acceptable in thy sight.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should be punctual in performing our morning and evening devotions.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ON THE BEHAVIOUR TO BE OBSERVED IN PLACES OF WORSHIP.

*The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him. Habac. ii. 20.*

OF the different ways of transgressing against the adoration due to God, the most to be avoided, Theophilus, is a want of respect in places dedicated to his service.

The precept, that enjoins us to revere those sacred edifices, is frequently repeated in the pages of the Scripture. "Reverence my sanctuary:"\* By these multiplied admonitions, you see how jealous God is of the honour of his house, and how offensive the profanations committed therein. Insomuch that that this was the only crime that roused the indignation of our Saviour, while on earth. He was compassionate to sinners. He received them with kindness, and even sat to table with them. But in regard to those that violated the sanctity of the temple, he seemed to forget the mild forbearance, which so peculiarly characterized him. Twice he drove them out of the temple, saying; "It is written; My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves."†

In fact, of all insults against the Deity, there is none more deserving of his resentment, than the abuse of those places that are devoted to his worship. For what in reality are they? They are the temples of God, which he fills with his glory: they are the habitations of the Almighty, which he honours with his presence: they are the mansions of the Divinity, appropriated to his service. Doubtless, the universe is his temple, the whole earth his abode: but a Church is a place, that he has particularly singled out for his worship and adoration. It is there the faithful assemble to pray to him, to praise him, and to celebrate the sacred mysteries. It is there Jesus Christ resides in person, and offers himself to his Father for us. What more do we want to impress us with respect and the most religious attention? Ought we not to be seized, on entering such places, with awful apprehension, and to exclaim

\* Lev. xvi. 2.

† Math. xxi. 13.

with the Patriarch: "How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven!"\* Who is it that dwells within the walls of these hallowed sanctuaries? Is it not the same Deity, the blessed adore in heaven? Is it not the Lamb of God, in whose presence Angels cover their faces with their wings? Like them, therefore, we should annihilate ourselves before the throne of his Supreme Majesty. He is, indeed, here veiled: but is he the less worthy of our veneration? How, then, can we dare to enter his residence without the respect that is due to him? How remain there inattentive and stupidly careless, and sometimes even with an air of levity, more becoming a play-house? O God! can Christians, can thy children conduct themselves in so censurable a manner?

Once more, what is a Church? It is a house of thanksgiving and benediction. It is there God takes pleasure in displaying his bounty, and exhibiting his mercy. Every thing therein proclaims his mercy to us. The sacred font, where, together with the life of grace, we received the invaluable right to a celestial inheritance: the cross, on which our Redeemer was immolated for us: the altar, on which he daily offers himself, to apply to our souls the fruit of his sufferings: ought not objects so interesting to awaken our attention, and stimulate our feelings? Ought they not to fill our minds with pious thoughts, and our hearts with devout affections? Like David, a Christian should burn with the desire of presenting himself before the Lord, of returning him thanks for his past blessings, and of soliciting his future aid. He should cry out with the Psalmist: "How lovely, are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!—For better is one day in thy courts above thousands."† How, then, does it happen that we go there with reluctance; that we feel so uneasy, while we are there; and that, during the time, we are generally occupied with frivolous, if not criminal thoughts? Shall so many proofs of the divine goodness speak in vain to our hearts? How insulting thus to answer his love with indifference only and disgust!

I am sorry, my God! for the faults I have committed in thy house through levity and giddiness. Pardon them, I entreat thee. I will make amends for them in future by my recollection and modesty. I will keep a guard upon my

\* Gen. xxviii. 17.

† Ps. lxxxiii. 1, 11.

senses, to avoid whatever may draw me off from that respectful attention which thy presence demands. I will watch over my thoughts, to keep at a distance all such as may lead me from thee. I will never more enter thy temple, without recalling to mind that thou dost fill it with thy glory. My sole employment there shall be to adore thee, to bless thee for thy mercies, to expose my wants to thee, and to interest thy beneficence in favour of my necessities. Such objects as these shall alone engage my attention, and take up the moments, that I spend in thy sight. Give me, dear Lord, the sentiments of an affectionate piety. Instil into me a holy fear, a respect mixed with confidence; and grant that, by a continual watchfulness, I may keep my mind steadily and invariably fixed on thee.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should always recollect ourselves, when we enter the house of God.

---

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ON SWEARING.

*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain. Exod. xx. 7.*

By this prohibition, God forbids us to swear, whether falsely or unnecessarily.

To swear, is to call on God to witness what we affirm, or what we promise. Sometimes, imprecation is added thereto; as when we wish any harm to ourselves, or to others, if what we assert be not true. It is a real oath, when, to certify a matter, we appeal to the testimony of any creature, as to the heavens, the earth, &c., because all creatures belong to God; and, therefore, to swear by them is, in fact, to swear by him, whose works they are. "Swear not at

all," says Christ, "neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is his foot-stool."\*

It is not at all times unlawful to swear. There are occasions on which it is incumbent to confirm by oath the truth of what is said: as, for instance, should we be cited before a magistrate of the civil power. In this case, we address ourselves to God, the Sovereign truth, and declare in his sacred name the certainty of what we affirm. The invocation of the Deity imprints an authority on the words of man, which settles every doubt. In circumstances of this nature, an oath is not only allowable; but even an act of religion, and a homage we pay to the Supreme and Eternal Truth. Men swear, says the Apostle, by one that is superior to themselves; and an oath is the firmest assurance they can give, to terminate their differences, and remove all suspicions.

But observe, my Theophilus, that, for an oath to be lawful, three conditions are requisite, as expressed by the Scripture in the following terms:—"You shall swear in truth, and in judgment, and in justice."† *Truth*, then, is the first thing requisite; that is to say, the object sworn to must not only be true; but we should likewise be sure of it, and, if the matter in question is a promise, be sincerely determined to fulfil the obligation. To swear to a falsehood, or to promise upon oath, what one has no intention of performing, is perjury: it is a sacrilegious abuse of the holy name of God: it is calling on the Sovereign truth to bear witness to a lie, and rendering it the accomplice of fraud and deceit. How dreadful a crime! What injury more atrocious can be offered to the Deity?

The second condition required to make an oath allowable is *judgment*; that is, it must not be recurred to but on subjects of importance, nor without a visible necessity. To swear, therefore, on light and trivial occasions; to swear through passion; to swear on every occurrence, to give, as it were, a relish, to conversation, is to dishonour God's name. Is, then, this adorable name to be made the sport of levity, the language of indiscretion, the vehicle of revenge, the impious seasoning of discourse? What an abuse of a name so sacred, that it ought not to be pronounced but with the most profound respect; of a name so tremendous, that it should not be used but with awful apprehension! Avail

\* Math. v. 31.

† Jer. iv. 2.

yourself of the advice which the Holy Ghost gives you: "Let not the naming of God be usual in thy mouth; a man that sweareth much, shall be filled with iniquity."\*

Finally, the last condition is *justice*; that is, we are never allowed to swear to do any thing unlawful. To engage oneself, by oath, to commit an unjust action, is attempting to make the Deity, who is holiness itself, subservient to man's iniquity: it is making him witness to a determination which his sanctity condemns: it is profaning his sacred name, in a manner the most outrageous. If, unfortunately, one should have taken such an unwarrantable oath, it must not be kept: that would be an additional offence. But in those circumstances, we should retract the promise, and beg pardon of God; not for having failed to execute the oath, but for having sworn by his name, to do what was wrong. Thus Herod, who had promised the daughter of Herodias to grant whatever she should ask, so far from being obliged by his oath to accede to her demand of the head of St. John, the Baptist, committed a grievous crime, in discharging his rash promise. An oath becomes invalid, of course, when it cannot be performed without offending the Almighty.

Pardon me, I entreat, O God! for having so often mentioned thy name without reverence or reflection. Hitherto, I have been unconscious of the wrong I did, in violating this precept. But now, that I am better informed, I detest my fault, and will endeavour to amend it. I will place a guard upon my tongue, to prevent it, in future, from pronouncing thy name in vain. If, through inattention, I should utter it without the respect which is due, I will immediately repent, and renew my resolution of doing so no more. Impress me with horror for whatever debases thy adorable name. Put a seal of circumspection on my lips, to secure them from profaning it. How I wish I could compensate, by my veneration for the daily insults that are offered to a name so adorable. Grant, O my Sovereign Good! that, honouring thee in all things, I may be so attentive to my words, as to let none in future escape me, but what may tend to promote thy glory.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must be careful to avoid contracting a habit of swearing.

\* Eccl. xxiii. 10—12.

## CHAPTER XL

## ON THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SUNDAY.

*Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Exod. xx. 8.*

ALL the days of our life belong equally to God; nor is there any one among them, that we are not bound to refer to him. But, as our ordinary avocations prevent a constant attention to the duties of religion, God has reserved to himself one day of each week, which he enjoins us to employ in his service and worship.

This precept is as ancient as the world itself. Immediately after the creation, God consecrated this day; that man might celebrate the memory of his mysterious repose, after the completion of this grand work. Such is the reason assigned for this command by the oracles of the Scripture. "God rested on the seventh day:" that is to say, he ceased to produce any thing more. "And he blessed the Sabbath day, and sanctified it."\* This day of God's rest was, under the Mosaic law, the seventh day. It was then styled the *Sabbath*, which signifies repose; and was devoted to the Most High, by whom every thing was made. But in the law of Christ, it is the first day of the week, denominated *Sunday*, or otherwise *the Lord's day*. This alteration took place in the time of the Apostles, and by divine authority; in remembrance of the resurrection of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ: because it is the day, on which, after the labours of his mortal life, he entered on his eternal and unchangeable repose. This day is made sacred to the honour of God, as the conqueror of death and the Saviour of mankind.

To sanctify the Lord's day, it is necessary, in the first place, to abstain from servile works; that is, from every work that is done for hire, that takes us off from the service of God, or that is, in any shape, incompatible with the attention he claims. "Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works," he says, "but the seventh day is the Sabbath (rest) of the Lord, thy God: thou shalt do no work on

\* Gen. ii. 2, 3.

it, thou, nor thy son,—nor thy servant,—nor the stranger, that is within thy walls.”\*

Under the Jewish law, this precept was observed to the rigour of the letter. The most necessary business, even that of dressing victuals, was prohibited on the Sabbath. We read that a man was put to death, for only gathering a few sticks upon it. The law of the Gospel is less severe. It allows such works, as necessity or charity may occasionally require: but no other does it permit. It is therefore a sin to employ oneself, on this day, about any mercenary labour, without an absolute necessity. It would be still a greater one to indulge in dissipation and criminal diversions, which, instead of sanctifying, would profane this solemn day. For, can it be supposed that things, at all times forbidden, are not yet more strictly prohibited, on the day appropriated to the Deity? And of all servile works, can there be any more inconsistent with the sanctification of the Sunday, than the works of iniquity which enslave us to the devil? Doubtless, Theophilus, the enormity of sin is aggravated by being committed on the Lord's day: since such a conduct must betray a greater forgetfulness of God, and a more marked contempt of his law and commands.

Neither is it enough to refrain from what is servile and criminal. We are, in the second place, bound to employ the Sunday in the service of God, by a serious application to the duties of religion. This is the spirit and design of the injunction here inculcated. If the Almighty orders us to desist from our usual occupations, it is that we may have no impediment in prosecuting his service. Can we think he would be honoured by a rest of indolence and inactivity? Would his day be sanctified by being spent at table, at play, or in visits? Most certainly it would not. The true way to keep the day holy, is to attend the divine office and public instructions; to employ it in praying and reading good books; and, in general, in the practice of all those works, that have for their object the worship of God, the sanctification of ourselves and the relief of our neighbours.

It is true that innocent and moderate recreation is not forbidden by this ordinance. This is necessary for our well-being, and may be lawfully taken. But it never can be

\* Exod. xx. 9, 10.



allowed to the prejudice of piety; and the time given to it, must not be taken from that which is allotted to devotion. Do not then, imagine that, having heard mass, you are obliged to nothing farther. To sanctify a day, it cannot be sufficient to spend a small portion of it in the discharge of religious duties. The Church, indeed, enjoins on us to assist at mass, as the chief of those good works, by which the day is to be kept holy. But this she enjoins as the principal, and by no means the only work; as a part, and not the whole. The other acts of worship, that she recommends during the day, are sufficient interpreters of her will in this regard.

Thou commandest us, O Lord! to honour the day, on which thou didst enter on thy repose. Thou wouldst have us, on this day, lay aside our wonted labours, to occupy ourselves entirely with the exercises of piety, divested of every care, but that of praising and adoring thee. Can there be an occupation more agreeable to thy children, than that of paying thee this tribute? This hereafter is to be our eternal employment. The rest, which, on this day, thou prescribest to mankind, is a figure of that repose, which shall never be interrupted. Into this we shall enter, if we are but faithful to thy commands. This hope is my comfort, the anticipation of that felicity, which thou reservest for the next life. May I continually aspire after this happy repose. Disengage, O God! my affections from this fleeting world and its perishable toys. Raise them up to those mansions, where, in perfect security, I shall rest on thy bosom: where, free from the afflictions and miseries of time, I shall have no other occupation than to praise thee for eternity.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should be solicitous to employ the Sunday in the worship of the Deity.

## CHAPTER XLI.

## ON THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

*He, that loveth his neighbour, hath fulfilled the law.—Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law.* Rom. xiii. 8, 10.

THE first three commandments mark out our duty in regard to the Deity; and the seven others direct our conduct in respect to our brethren. All the obligations we owe them, are comprised in this one precept: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

To love our neighbour as ourselves, is to wish and procure the like good to him, as we do to ourselves. There is nothing Christ urges more forcibly, than this love of our fellow creatures. "This is my commandment," he says, "that you love one another."\* This he has made the badge by which his disciples are to be known. Wherefore, whoever loves not his neighbour is no disciple of Christ. He renounces his Gospel, and the advantages promised in it. This was so well understood by the primitive Christians, that among them there subsisted a concord the most complete, a charity the most perfect. Insomuch, that it might with justice be said of them that they appeared to possess but one heart and one soul. The heathens, who witnessed it, were struck with admiration, and exclaimed in rapture: "See how they love one another." But, alas, how dissimilar the sentiments and manners of their successors! O amiable charity, thou distinguishing feature of genuine Christianity, what is now become of thee! Nevertheless, my dear Theophilus, without this lovely virtue, the hope of salvation is vain.

For whoever loves not his neighbour, loves not his God, says St. John, the favourite disciple of Christ, who was so thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine of his Master. Hear his own words. "If any man say; I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not?"†

\* John xv. 12.

† 1 John iv. 20.

To his dying breath, this Apostle of love never ceased to inculcate the doctrine of fraternal charity. It is told of him that, in the last stage of his life, he continued incessantly to repeat these words: "My dear children, love one another." And being asked why he reiterated the same thing so often, he made this reply: "It is the commandment of the Lord; and, if faithfully complied with, will alone be sufficient." In like manner, St. Paul reduces the whole law to this single point. And in fact, whoever truly loves his neighbour, will be far from doing, in his regard, any thing forbidden by the authority of God. He will not insult him; he will not offer him any violence; he will not do him an injury; he will not have a wish to deceive him, or to take advantage of his weakness.

But suppose not, my child, that by the term neighbour, those alone are to be understood, with whom we are connected, whether as relatives or friends. "If you love them," Christ says, "that love you, what reward shall you have? do not also the heathens do this?"\* This appellation, then, includes all mankind: because all have the same origin, the great, omnipotent Creator; all compose one family, of which God is the Father; all are made for the same end, an eternity of happiness; and all are redeemed with one general ransom, the blood of Jesus Christ, who died a sacrifice for all. This love must be extended to, and embrace our very enemies. The command of Christ is explicit, and clear beyond objection. "I say to you, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you: pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: That you may be the children of your father, who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and the bad."†

Say not that it suffices to wish no harm to those, that hate or dislike you; but that, as for loving or treating them with kindness, it is in a manner impossible. No, it is not impossible to the grace of God; and this grace he will grant to such, as ask it of him sincerely. It is God that commands; and he commands not impossibilities. He would have us do what we can, and petition him for what we cannot do, in a firm confidence of his support. Jesus Christ has set the example of this generous charity, by praying for his execu-

\* Math. v. 46, 47.

† Math. v. 44, 45.

tioners. Men, like ourselves, have performed, by the aid of his grace, what we call impossible. Joseph saved the lives of his prejudiced brethren, who had made an attempt upon his. David spared that of Saul, at the time when Saul wished to bring destruction on him. St. Stephen prayed for those, that were actually stoning him.

Thou, O God! art the fountain of charity: and thou hast told us we cannot be thy disciples, if we love not our brethren. This divine charity thou hast taught us both by thy word and example. Grant me then the grace to love them sincerely, as I love myself; and both to wish, and to do them all the good in my power. Teach me to love them, not from human considerations, but from motives of religion: and may nothing extinguish or weaken my charity. May it embrace all mankind; my enemies, as well as others. Yes, dear Lord! when I have any thing to suffer on the part of men, I will remember that thou didst die for us, at the time we were thy enemies, and that thou didst pray for them, who were putting thee to death. I renounce that revengeful spirit, which would prompt me to return evil for evil. I will industriously avoid doing any thing, that may offend or displease them: and, to gain them to thee, I will endeavour to win them by every possible attention.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should do good to all, as far as in our power.

---

## CHAPTER XLII.

### ON THE DUTY OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS.

*Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayst be long-lived upon the land. Exod. xx. 12.*

To impress more sensibly the importance of this precept, God was pleased to confirm it by the testimony of his voice; though he had previously engraved it on the hearts of mankind. This obligation he places at the head of the duties,

that relate to our neighbour: and scarcely has he told us what we owe to himself, than he informs us what he requires in regard to our parents. A proceeding, which evinces that, next to the Deity, they justly claim the preference in our esteem and affections.

This is the only commandment, to which he has annexed a temporal reward; having promised a long life to them, that observe it. Learn hence, then, Theophilus, how much God takes to heart, that you render to your parents, the honour due to them. See how advantageous, how indispensable it is for you to treat them, as he desires. Now, the honour you owe them, comprises four obligations. You must *respect* them; you must *love* them; you must *obey* them, and you must *assist* them in their wants.

The first duty, therefore, I say of children, in relation to their parents, is *respect*; and a respect, that must be inviolable at all times and in all circumstances. This respect consists in receiving with deference their advice and corrections; in speaking to them kindly, in fearing to displease them, and in striving to conceal and to excuse their defects. "It is just," says a holy doctor, "that children should revere those, to whom they are indebted for their being. It would be an atrocious ingratitude to despise them that are the source of whatever they have." Parents, in regard to their children, are the substitutes of the Deity; they hold his place, and are the depositaries of his authority. To be wanting to them, is to be wanting to God himself. An injury, done to them, recoils upon him, whose representatives they are. For which reason, in the old law, he ordered insolence to parents to be punished with the utmost rigour. "He that curseth his father, or mother shall die the death."\*

The second duty of children is to *love* their parents. But is there a necessity of proving this obligation? It will, doubtless, suffice to remind you of what they have already done for you, and of what they are actually doing. They gave your life: as soon as you were born, they began their tender care; and, in that helpless state, you were their only occupation, as I may say: they nursed you through your infancy; and however disagreeable the attendance, you then needed, they gave it with the greatest pleasure. Recollect their attention to your wants, their solicitude for your well-

\* Exod. xxi. 19.

being, their alarms for your health. And, to this day, what trouble do they not take; what expenses do they not incur, to procure you what is suitable. Can you ever sufficiently love them, that love you so affectionately? A child, that did not love his parents, would be no Christian: he would even be unworthy of the name of man: that of monster would become him better.

The third obligation, a child lies under to his parents, is *obedience*. "Children," says St. Paul, "be obedient to your parents; for that is just before the Lord." Obedience will be the test of your respect and affection. The child, who disobeys his parents, or who obeys them with reluctance only, has neither the respect nor the love for them, which they challenge. Avoid then a conduct, that, both, in the eyes of God and in those of mankind, is so offensive and criminal. Obey them under all circumstances; and obey them with cheerfulness. Remember that Christ himself has given you an example of the submission, he exacts. Though the Sovereign Lord of all things, he was obedient to his holy mother, and no less so to Joseph, whom he considered as a father.

Finally, the fourth duty of children is to *assist* their parents in their necessities: for instance, in infirmity, in age, in poverty. On all occasions, they are bound to help them, and to let them want for nothing, that they are able to procure. To be sensible of these obligations, it is enough to have a heart. A child should be happy to have the power of returning to his parents a part of what he has received from them. To neglect this duty would be a scandalous ingratitude, of which no one could be capable, that had not previously suppressed all the feelings of nature. For which reason, the sacred oracles express themselves with horror of a person, guilty of this crime.

Was it then necessary, O God! to issue a distinct and formal precept, to teach me to love my parents? Did not my heart apprise me sufficiently of this natural obligation? But thou wert desirous to imprint more deeply the necessity of fulfilling it. By the help of thy grace, I will never be wanting in it. I will always respect those, whom thou hast made the instruments of thy power, in bringing me into life, and of thy providence, in maintaining it. Next to thee, I will love them. For what can be so near to me, as they, to whom I owe my existence, my education, and my all. I will be their consolation, by an entire obedience and a submission without

reserve. I will be their support in their old age, as they were mine in my infancy. Nothing shall alter my present sentiments, which I feel to be their due. By this behaviour to them, I shall merit a share in the blessings, which thou hast promised to obedient and dutiful children.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we must in all things be submissive and attentive to our parents.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### ON THE DUTY OF SCHOLARS TO THEIR MASTERS.

*Obey your prelates, and be subject to them'. For they watch, as being to render an account of your souls; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief. Heb. xiii. 17.*

MASTERS, who are entrusted with the education of children, have, next to their parents, the chief claim upon them. Their business is to instruct them in religion, to teach them human sciences, to direct their conduct and to form their dispositions. A master should have for his scholar the sentiments of a father, and consider himself as bound to fulfil his obligations. The scholar, therefore, on his side, ought to honour him almost as much, and to pay him the tribute of *respect, love, docility and gratitude.*

The scholar's first duty, in regard to his master, is esteem and respect. To your father, my Theophilus, you are indebted for your life; and he holds, relatively to you, the place of Almighty God. On this two-fold title, you are obligated to respect him. And is not the master, who forms you to virtue and science, in some sense, the parent and father of your soul? Is he not, in reference to you, the interpreter of Heaven? There is, properly speaking, but one sole master; viz. the eternal truth, the ineffable wisdom. "This is the light, that enlighteneth every man, that cometh into the

world.”\* The master, who instructs you, consults first this light himself; and it is his duty and solicitude to discover it to you. It is God, therefore, that teaches you, by the means of your preceptor: and of consequence with what awful respect should you receive his instructions! On this subject, so interesting to you, I will tell you a story of the noted Theodosius, and show you the sentiments of that truly great emperor, upon the matter now before us. Going one day into the apartments of his son, and perceiving that his tutor, Arsenius, was giving his lesson standing, while the royal pupil was seated, he testified his displeasure at it. He made his son divest himself of the ornaments of his dignity; ordered Arsenius to sit down, and commanded the young prince to take his future lessons bareheaded and standing.

Secondly, a scholar is bound to *love* his master. And of this obligation you will be easily satisfied, if you but observe the daily pains, your instructors take about you. For the improvement of his pupil, the master sacrifices his time, his health, and, I may almost say, his life. He gives up his liberty and reduces himself to a kind of servitude. He performs with patience the irksome task of continually repeating the self-same things. What a claim on your affections does he not acquire, by so many sacrifices, tending wholly to your advantage? Nor ought the reprimands, he sometimes gives, diminish your love for him, if you think reasonably and justly. He reproves you from regard only and the desire of your improvement. If he loved you less, he would not be so anxious about you. Is he obliged to use severer means? He does it with reluctance, while his feelings suffer for it. Who should correct your faults, if not the person that is ordained to be your ruler and guide?

Thirdly, the pupil must be *docile*. As it is the duty of the master to instruct and inform, so it is that of the scholar to be docile and attentive. However great the preceptor's abilities, however unwearied his industry, neither his lessons, nor his care will be of any avail, if the pupil be intractable. One often meets with those, that have gone through the stated course of a regular education with very little profit. They are unequal to the task, on which they are afterwards employed, and their ignorance hourly betrays them into the grossest mistakes. And would you know the reason? In-

\* John i.



form yourself from those, that knew them in their youth. They will tell you they were self-conceited, refractory and head-strong: that they would bend to no authority, listen to no advice, nor submit to any reprimand: they made free with their master's character, and exposed his defects: they took a malicious pleasure in saying what ill they could of him, and in setting others against him. And what do we find the consequence? They continue ignorant and obstinate: they are at best useless to society; and, in a word, they are, at present, bad citizens, because, in their youth, they were unmanageable scholars. Copy them not, I pray: but follow the advice, which the Holy Ghost gives you: "My son, from thy youth up receive instruction; and even to thy gray hairs thou shalt find wisdom."\*

Lastly, *gratitude* to his master closes the list of the duties, to which the scholar is obliged. Perhaps, at present you are not sensible of your obligations to your instructors, nor of the service they render you. But the time will come, when you will comprehend the value of a good education; and then you will understand how greatly you are indebted to them. The advantages of education are beyond all price. A trifling salary is but a pitiful recompense to an assiduous master. The benefits he confers are as durable as life; and the gratitude of the pupil ought to know no other bounds.

It is thyself, who, in fact, are our master, O God! They, that teach us, are but thy interpreters. They speak to us in thy name, and they act in thy authority, when they instruct and correct us. Thou commandest us to respect, to love, and to obey them. Enable me to discharge these essential obligations; and give me a docile heart, to improve by their instructions. May I respect, in them, thy Supreme authority: and, if subjection be disagreeable, may I bear it with patience, from a wish to please thee. May I imbibe a just sense of the service they do me; and may I repay so great a favour by, at least, a sincere attachment to them. Such conduct as this, while it tends to facilitate my progress in learning, will, I hope, sweeten the bitterness of their tedious functions.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That children should be tractable and obedient to their masters.

\* Eccl. vi. 18.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

## ON MURDER, &amp;c.

*Thou shalt not kill.* Exod. xx. 13. *Not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing.* 1 Peter iii. 9.

By this prohibition, God forbids us to attempt the life of a fellow creature; as also to take away our own, for any possible cause. But it regards not the execution of criminal justice; nor the use of that public authority which is established for the good of society. The legislative power has a right to punish with death all such, as notoriously infringe its regulations. "The magistrate," says St. Paul, "beareth not the sword in vain: for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him that doth evil."\* Again, a soldier, in battle, may lawfully kill his enemy, who, in his regard, is a public one, in obedience to his commander, and for the defence of his country. But no individual, without rendering himself culpable in a most atrocious degree, can destroy the life of another, to satisfy his own malignity. This would be an insolent attempt upon the sovereignty of God, in whose hands alone is the distribution of life and death. Murder is the greatest possible crime, that can be committed between man and man, by depriving a fellow-creature of what is most estimable to him. And of this horrid crime we become guilty, not only by perpetrating it by our own act and deed, but also by inciting others to it, by advice or persuasion.

But the law of God is not content with prohibiting murder. It likewise forbids anger, quarrelling, hatred, and contempt. So Christ himself explains this precept. His words are these: "You have heard that it was said to them of old; thou shalt not kill; and whoever shall kill, shall be in danger of judgment;" (that is to say, of the vengeance and pursuit of human justice.) "But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, RACA," (a term of contempt,) "shall be in danger of the council. And whoever shall say, THOU FOOL, shall be in danger of hell-fire."† You

\* Rom. xiii. 4.

† Math. v. 21. 22.

see, then, Theophilus, that, without staining our hands with the blood of a neighbour, we are guilty in the sight of God, and amenable to his bar, as often as we give way to anger or hatred. You see that his condemnation receives an additional degree of severity, if to hatred be joined contempt: more especially, if this contempt shows itself outwardly, in terms of insult or reproach, or in any kind of opprobrious and abusive mode of speech.

Christ commands us to suppress all emotions of anger, and every desire of revenge. He forbids all their effects, such as injurious words and contemptuous behaviour: because every thing of the sort is a step towards murder, and, unless checked in time, may possibly lead us to it. For which reason, St. John declares that, "whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer."\* What then can we think of those, who either give or receive a challenge, but that they are enormously culpable in the eyes of the Almighty! How impious, to imbrue their hands in the blood of a fellow-creature, for a slight affront or trifling jest; and to sacrifice their own salvation, and that, of a companion, to an imaginary point of honour! The Greeks and Romans, though mere heathens, were not so wretchedly misled. They were passionately fond of glory; but their notions of this matter were more correct than ours. They placed it in shedding their blood in defence of their country, and only used their arms against the enemies of the state, and not against their comrades. Duelling is a crime as opposed to humanity, as it is to religion: as contrary to reason, as to the principles of the Christian doctrine.

To take away one's own life is no less criminal and impious. Life is a trust which the Deity has committed to our protection; and which he enjoins us to preserve, till it shall please him to redemand it. To dispose of it without his permission, and in defiance of his order, is to intrude upon the rights of him, who alone is its arbiter. This crime is by so much the more horrid, as it is remediless and irretrievable. The suicide, by cutting short the time of repentance, precipitates himself, without resource, into everlasting damnation. What a madness, for a passing uneasiness, the vexation of a moment, to fling oneself headlong into eternal misery.

\* 1 John iii. 15.

O God! to what extremities of violence does not unbridled passion hurry us! Permit me not to open my breast to either anger or hatred, which so quickly silence reason, and overpower all reflection. If ever I experience their emotions, enable me, by thy grace, to suppress them in their infancy. Give me that spirit of meekness, which thy doctrine so much inculcates, and thy practice recommends. Thou hast suffered before me, and far more than I can suffer. Exposed to the malice of thy enemies, thou didst not open thy mouth; much less didst thou seek revenge against them that insulted thee. On the contrary, thou didst support with patience the injuries heaped upon thee. Shall I deviate so widely from the bright example thou hast set me? Shall I be so feelingly alive to every appearance of slight, when I behold thee silent and unmoved amidst the most grievous calumnies, and expiring on a cross, in the act of praying for thy executioners? O Lord! support my weakness, and give me the strength to imitate thy pattern.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should carefully stifle the first risings of passion.

---

CHAPTER XLV.

ON SCANDAL.

*Wo to the man, by whom scandal cometh.* Math. xviii. 7.

SCANDAL consists in leading others to vice, or in seducing them from virtue. It is a murder of another kind, which, though it strikes not the senses, is not less real in the eyes of faith, nor less criminal in the sight of God. Scandal kills the soul, by depriving it of grace, which is its energy and life. For which reason, Christ utters the most dreadful threats against them, that unhappily occasion it. "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck,

and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea."\* Judge, my dear Theophilus, of the enormity of this evil, by the expressions used by Christ to impress us with a horror of it.

Consider the effects of scandal, and you will readily own the justice of the punishments, reserved for it. And what are these effects? To oppose the designs of God of saving all mankind. "It is not the will of your Father, who is in heaven," says Christ, "that one of these little ones should perish."† He has adopted all for his children; and he desires to save all. But scandal counteracts his intentions, by bringing destruction on those that he wishes to save. The person who gives scandal renders void the effects of our redemption by Jesus Christ. This Divine Saviour came into the world to liberate us; he shed his blood to rescue us. But scandal robs him of those souls, that he has bought at so great a price; it wrests his conquests from him, and brings them into the danger of unutterable misery, for whom he has merited an infinite happiness.

A young man, for instance, is virtuously disposed. Obedient to his superiors, and observant of his duties, he is beloved of heaven, and experiences its protection. But he has the misfortune to become acquainted with an unprincipled libertine, who sets religion at defiance, who turns virtue into ridicule, and laughs at the professors of it. The youth, staggered by his conversation, shrinks at the apprehension of his derision and raillery. Thus circumstanced, the libertine goes farther with him. He entertains him with licentious discourses, gives him bad advice, and confirms it by his own example. The eyes of the unhappy youth are now opened to what he was before ignorant of; his mind is warped by the force of bad impressions; and, his principles thus debauched, he becomes a slave to the like passions, a prey to similar vices, as his infamous seducer. It was the desire of Jesus Christ, that his soul should be saved, and for this purpose he died. But the sinner, by his scandal, effects its perdition; and instead of eternal happiness, which God had intended, exposes it to certain and infinite misery. What punishment must he not expect then? Or rather is there a punishment severe enough for him? Wretch! Thou wouldst be shocked at the idea of polluting thy hands with the blood of

\* Math. xviii. 6.

† Math. xviii. 14.

a companion, and thou dost him an injury which is incomparably greater. Less cruel wouldst thou be to plunge a dagger into his bosom, and deprive him of life. This soul, which thou hast murdered, will eternally cry for vengeance, and its cry shall be heard.

Wo therefore to him who corrupts the youthful mind, by conversation or example. Wo to him, who seduces innocence from the path of discipline and virtue. Wo to him, who, by scornful raillery, diverts others from the pursuit of piety. Wo to him, who circulates books destructive of faith or morals. Wo to him, who, by immodest pictures or lewd songs, spread the contagion of vice. Finally, wo to him, who causes scandal in any manner whatsoever; or who, having it in his power, does not exert himself to prevent it. To all such are imputable the sins, that their scandal may occasion, even after their decease.

I did not know, O God! the full enormity of the sin of scandal. I never considered its consequences, nor the terrible chastisements, that await them, who give it. Permit me not to become to others an occasion of sin. For the future, I will be on my guard, neither to do nor to say, what may lead my neighbour into evil. Alas! Is it not sufficient that I shall have to answer for my own transgressions, without adding those of my brethren? If I have been so unfortunate as to scandalize any one, vouchsafe, dear Lord! to pardon me. I will strive to repair it, by giving good example in future; and to edify my companions, by a faithful discharge of all the duties of my state. Such is thy command, O God! expressed in these words; "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."\* This command I will execute; and endeavour, by my deportment, to inspire others with a love of virtue. Grant me this grace, for the honour of thy name, and for the salvation of my own and the souls of my brethren, which thou valuest so highly.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should watch all our words and actions, to avoid giving scandal.

\* Math. v. 16.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

## ON IMPURITY.

*Thou shalt not commit adultery. Exod. xx. 14. Flying the corruption of that concupiscence, which is in the world. 2 Peter i. 4.*

EVERY species of impurity, whether by thought, word, or action, is forbidden by the law of God. And this prohibition extends to whatever may lead to, or prove an occasion of this sin; as excess in eating or drinking, licentious plays, immodest books, lascivious pictures, indecent dress, &c.

In the black catalogue of vices, there is none more opposite to the sanctity of God, or which he punishes with greater rigour, than the one now before us. In the history of the Scripture, we see dreadful examples of the vengeance inflicted on it, even during this life. In punishment of this shameful crime, God destroyed the whole world, one single family excepted, by the waters of the deluge: and, for the commission of this same sin, he consumed with fire, hurled down from heaven, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, with the adjacent neighbourhood. Yet this tremendous chastisement is but a faint resemblance of the inextinguishable flames reserved for such, as imitate them. St. Paul pronounces, in general terms, that they shall be excluded from heaven. "Know," he says, "that no fornicator or unclean person, hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."\* And, again, "Do not err; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, shall possess the kingdom of God."†

This crime shall be punished even in the heathens, that know not God: because it is contrary to reason, which is given all for a guide; and because man, by yielding to it, vilely debases himself; and, superior to beasts, as nature has made him, he sinks to a level with them, by an imitation of their brutality. But it is much more criminal and enormous in a Christian, in one regenerated in Christ; because most opposite to his vocation, which is to be pure and holy; most injurious to the Holy Ghost, by profaning his temple; and most

\* Ephes. v. 5.

† 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

offensive to Christ, by contaminating his members. "This is the will of God," says St. Paul, "your sanctification: that you should abstain from fornication. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification."\* "Know you not that you are the temple of God. But if any one violate that temple of God, (by abusing his body,) him shall God destroy."† "Know you not," he continues, "that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot?"‡

What a crime to prostitute the temple of the Deity! How atrocious a sacrilege to dishonour his members! This idea, Theophilus, ought to strike you with horror: and you will be confirmed in this way of thinking, if you reflect on the fatal consequences, attending this vice. It impairs a man's health, injures his fortune, brings ruin on himself, and disgrace on his family. A person given to lewdness, becomes a scandal to his relations, and the scorn of his acquaintance, and either miserably perishes in the flower of his age, or drags on a wretched life, in ignominy and sorrow. But the effects of this vice are still more pernicious in regard to the soul. It obscures the understanding, and renders the mind incapable of any serious application. A person enslaved to it, can attend to nothing solid. His passion every where pursues him, and engrosses all his thoughts. Every kind of employment is tedious, irksome and disgusting. And the heart is yet more disordered than the mind. He conceives an almost insurmountable aversion to prayer, and to every species of religious duties. He becomes that *animal being*, of whom the Apostle speaks, that comprehends nothing of the concerns of heaven. The very sight of such, as are virtuous, is distressing to his feelings; because he considers their conduct as a tacit censure of his own. "Every one that doth evil," says Christ, "hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that their works may not be reproved."§

To the corruption of his heart succeed hardness and obduracy: for no vice so benumbs and stupifies the soul. His dearest interests are neglected. The divine promises and threats are equally contemned. Eternal happiness or misery in vain exert their influence. Every thing profitable is sacri-

\* THESS. iv. 3, 7.

† 1 Cor. vi. 15.

‡ 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

§ John iii. 20.



ficed; every thing serious despised. He forgets what he owes to others; and disregards what he owes to himself. Reason no longer guides him, but wild and impetuous passion. And while the public is witness to his intemperate folly, he himself is so blind, as not to see his own shame. Even faith yields to the shock, and abandons him to his fate: for religion and dissoluteness can never live together. To stifle the clamours of conscience, and to go on undisturbed in his vicious pursuits, he begins by calling in question the most universally received tenets, and quickly concludes by disbelieving every thing. Hence final impenitence. He dies in his sins; and appears at the bar of heaven covered with filth, with which his life was polluted: for, "His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust."\*

My feelings, O God! on this subject are those of terrifying apprehension. On the one side, I hear thy voice, informing me that impurity is abominable in thy sight, and will most assuredly be followed by the most dreadful calamities. On the other, I am conscious of an unhappy disposition, that inclines me to this vice. I feel an imperious law, that opposes thy holy precepts. It is not that I hesitate; for I will certainly obey thee. But what combats shall I not have to sustain! What dangers am I not exposed to! I am fearful of betraying thee. My weakness alarms me. For what can I do, of myself, against so potent a foe? I will not trust to my strength: if I do, I shall be vanquished. I will confide wholly in thy grace, which will render me invincible. Support me, O Lord! and do not quit me for an instant, lest my enemy prevail. With thee I can do every thing; but without thee nothing. Thou commandest me to be chaste and pure: give me what thou commandest. No, my God! Thou wilt not forsake me: so thou hast promised, and thou art true to thy word. I would rather die than offend thee: and, these being my sentiments, I may hope for thy assistance. Yes, thou wilt be with me in the trials, I must expect to encounter. This is my consolation. For, with the help of thy grace, what have I to fear? Under the wings of thy protection, I shall conquer and triumph.

\* Job xx. 11.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should conceive the most lively abhorrence of the crime of impurity.

---

## CHAPTER XLVII.

## ON BAD COMPANY.

*Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* Ps. vi. 9.

As the principal occasions of the sin of impurity are bad company, immoral books, and obscene plays, it is necessary to show you their danger, in order to caution you against them. I will begin by bad company.

Nothing, my dear Theophilus, is more dangerous to your morals than the company of libertines, who, themselves having become callous to the fear of the Almighty, and to the impressions of modesty, incite others to sin by word or example. If you form acquaintance with people of this stamp, your virtue will surely pay for it. The Holy Spirit exhorts us frequently to shun bad company, and to break off all acquaintance with them. "My son," he says, "if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them. If they shall say: come with us, my son, walk thou not with them: restrain thy foot from their paths."\* Will you condemn this admonition? Informed by truth itself that vice is a pestilence; that the wicked communicate its infection to all, who come near them; and that, by frequenting their society, one acquires a way of thinking, of speaking, and of acting as they do, will you expose yourself to the hazard of contracting their evil habits, and of perishing with them? Would you like to live with people infected with the plague? Doubtless, you would not, for fear of the consequences. Behave in like manner in regard to those, whose conversation might endanger your salvation.

Bad company is to the soul what a contagious distemper

\* Prov. i. 10.

is to the body. As they, that are inwardly decayed, communicate by the breath of their corporal infection, so the wicked impart by conversation the disorders of their heart. What are the topics of the discourse with which they amuse themselves? What the grounds of their talk, when free from restraint? The usual matter of their conversation is whatever flatters the passions. Every thing indecent they have seen, every thing scandalous they have heard, is then the subject of their mirth. Sometimes, they give a loose to the most profligate liberties; and even go so far, as to glory in their infamy, and impudently boast of crimes, which they never committed: modesty is ridiculed; and piety becomes the object of their derision and scorn. How perilous a situation for a youth, that is still virtuous, unless he immediately breaks away from such pernicious companions! The poison of sin steals into his heart. At first, timidity overawes him: he has not the courage to check them, nor to censure their proceedings: he is afraid of displeasing them, or of exciting their raillery, if he will not follow their example. By degrees, he gets familiar with what once seemed so shocking: he tamely abandons himself to the like irregularities, and concludes by becoming ashamed of his past innocence and virtue.

Is it not then with reason that St. Austin exclaims: "How fatally destructive is the company of the profligate!" He himself, in his youth, had experienced its baleful influence. The example of his companions had drawn him into vice, as he tells us in his writings. "I remember," he says, "the time, when I never should have thought of committing such a sin; no, not even would I have been tempted to it, had I kept to myself. O, how much are we our own enemies, when we make acquaintance with bad people! To what can their friendship lead, but to pervert the powers of reason to an almost incredible degree? For, as soon as any of them said; come, let us go and do so; there was not one that did not follow, and blush to feel conscious that he was still capable of blushing." You here see to what evil company will carry us. Avoid it, therefore, I entreat you. Shun all such connexions, with the greatest possible abhorrence. The friend of the vicious will become as vicious as they. "He that loves the danger, shall perish in it." The best education, the most untainted innocence are no security against them. Trust not to your dispositions, nor to your firmest resolves. One single conversation is sufficient to shake, and

finally overturn the most rooted in virtue. "The wise man," says the word of God, "feareth and declineth from evil; the fool leapeth over it, and is confident."\* I once more, then, my dear child, conjure you, with St. Paul, to decline the company of those whose manners are reproachable.

This, O my God! I here firmly determine to do. I will avoid all such acquaintance. In vain shall they strive to entice me, by the false appearances of friendship. This I will consider as a snare, to draw me into vice; for their sole aim is to instil into my heart the venom of their own. Not satisfied with offending thee themselves, they endeavour to acquire accomplices and sharers in their guilt. They make every effort to seduce others from thy service. Can I possibly have any connexion with them, without hazarding my salvation? Alas, O Lord! I am already but too ill disposed, through the inclinations of corrupt nature. What, therefore, should I be, with the addition of the persuasion and example of the wicked? On the contrary, I will seek a prop to my weakness, in the society of the virtuous. No other friends will I have, but such as fear and love thee.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must shun, with the greatest care, the contagion of bad company.

---

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### ON IMMORAL BOOKS.

*Many of them who had followed curious arts, brought together their books, and burnt them before all. Acts xix. 19.*

A SECOND occasion of the shipwreck of innocence and purity of morals is the reading of bad books; which fill the mind with dangerous thoughts, and the imagination with

\* Prov. xiv. 16.

obscene ideas. The venom spreads to the heart; and, by corroding its vitals, effectually corrupts it.

How many have fallen victims to these vehicles of infection! How many have to bewail the rash curiosity, that unhappily induces them to peruse such works! They are now sensible, that the irregularity of their conduct, the loss of their health, and the ruin of their fortune, are chiefly owing to the operation of this cause. The reading of licentious writings first heated those seeds of corruption, we all bear in our hearts; thus the fruit of the primary, original sin: and the passions once inflamed, bade defiance to control.

One single bad book is enough to pervert a thousand young people. It passes through a variety of hands; the contagion circulates, and infects a whole family. But the effect is still more ruinous, if it be one of those abominable writings, in which, together with wanton intrigues, lascivious anecdotes, and impassioned descriptions, are joined impious maxims and irreligious principles, calculated to banish the fear of God, and to make faith itself totter. These restraints once trampled on, into what excesses will not they run, who have levelled the barrier? What lengths will they not go? And what is there to stop them? Religion is the surest safeguard and protection of virtue; the strongest fence, that can be opposed to the violence of the passions. Destroy this fence, and the torrent will rush in, and sweep every thing before it. Faith, while it continues to hold, keeps the door open for repentance. If we have the misfortune to act wrong, at least we condemn and reproach ourselves for it. But, if faith be lost, we are deprived of the means of returning to our duty. The evil is without remedy; the mischief without resource.

Alas! my Theophilus, our own unhappy age, which is deluged with such productions, affords but too many proofs of the depravity they occasion. Fatal experience has taught us more upon this lamentable subject, than ever was known to the wisdom of our forefathers. On every side, we hear complaints of the misconduct of youth, of their libertinism, and of their presumptuous contempt of parental authority. What was formerly but levity, and the giddiness of their age, is now become profligacy, and corruption of heart. And do you wish to be informed of the cause of all this mischief? Profane and immoral books, which are multiplied without end, are among the foremost of its sources. And would to

God the evil stopped here. But the youth, whose principles are sapped, and whose morals are vitiated by impious writings, become capable of every desperate attempt. Witness the horrors of the French Revolution, at the recital of whose atrocities humanity, as well as religion, stands appalled and shudders: a catastrophe principally caused by the influence of licentious writings. Beware then, my child; and if yet untainted, listen to the admonitions of a friend. Never read any books that may effect either your principles or morals. If any such be offered to you, reject them with abhorrence. The temptation of perusing them, if they remain in your hands, will be found irresistible. And if already you have been injured by this criminal curiosity, do justice to yourself, and abjure it in future. Imitate, in this regard, the conduct of St. Teresa. She was educated from her infancy in the school of devotion, but by degrees fell into a langour, that nearly proved her ruin. She tells us herself that this deplorable alteration was principally caused by reading romances. But God favoured her with the grace of discovering her error; and she found, in books of piety, the antidote to her tepidity and the means of recovering her fervour.

Say not that you read such writings for the sake of improvement, to cultivate your mind or to form your style. All these advantages you may draw from purer and safer sources. Excellent compositions, in every branch, and which may be read without danger, are universally to be met with. Consult some intelligent friend. He will point out to you more works that unite the utility of science with the graces of style, than you will be able to run through in the course of a long life. If you give the preference to such as are calculated to corrupt you, it will be but candour to own that passion not reason directs your choice. I add that all the advantages the world can afford you, are not worth being purchased at the expense of your innocence.

It is thyself, O God! who speakest to us by the medium of good books. To read them is to hear thee, the fountain of information, the source of all truth. On the contrary, it is the devil we converse with, whenever we give our time to the perusal of bad books. These organs he employs to effect our destruction. Shall I then be so miserable, so injurious to myself, as to choose such a preceptor, and take lessons from him? What can I expect to learn in his school of impiety? He is the father of lies, of error and of vice. He would mis-

guide my understanding, and deprave my inclinations. He would stir up within me ungovernable passions, that would operate my ruin, and make me wretched even in this life, and plunge me into perdition in the life to come. I therefore cordially renounce all such inquisitive curiosity, as cannot be gratified but by the loss of thy grace, the forfeiture of my innocence and the risk of eternal happiness.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we must resolutely decline reading all dangerous books.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### ON PLAYS.

*Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world.*  
1 John ii. 15.

PLAYS are inimical to virtue in general; but especially to purity. If, then, my dear Theophilus, you wish to preserve the precious treasure of grace, keep at a distance from them.

Not to speak of those plays, in which modesty is openly insulted, and which are frequented only by people of less rigorous principles, how great danger is there not even in those that are styled sentimental and refined, wherein nothing gross is admitted, nor any expressions made use of, than can shock the ears of delicacy! In spite of this varnish of elaborate decency, it is, at bottom, the same passion that constitutes their essence. Impure love is the main-spring of every piece that is introduced upon the stage. It is this darling passion, that chiefly makes a play interesting, and crowds the houses. Whatever is therein heard, whatever is seen, is calculated to awaken, to inflame and to strengthen it. Even the show of decorum increases the peril; by diminishing that horror, which vice would excite, were it uncovered and barefaced. The studied veil of modesty gives additional force to that seductive inclination, which is the ruin of all, who wilfully cherish it.

And to examine this matter more closely: what does one hear from the stage? Animated narratives of the various emotions, that a passion, irritated by opposition, can excite in a breast, which it occupies and fills. This passion is there represented as, at worst, an infirmity; and, to render it more interesting, is attributed to some personage, whose qualities and character are otherwise engaged. The beauty of the scenery, the graces of poetry, the force of declamation and the charms of music are all employed to blow up a flame, which, independently of such incentives, already too much endangers the hearts of the audience. Again, what does one see there? Objects dangerous in themselves, and rendered still more so by the dispositions of the spectators. The poison enters by every sense. How then shall the soul defend herself against such a combination of enemies; amidst such numerous solicitations, that enervate and relax her! The most solid and steady virtue could not long support the trial. What then will become of that of the youth, who voluntarily exposes himself? How almost irresistibly bewitching must his sensations be, from the circumstance of his age and the ebullition of his blood! No, it cannot be doubted but innocence there receives many a grievous and deadly wound.

Nevertheless, you will meet with those, that endeavour to justify the use of such amusements. They will cite for you, the examples of good people, who frequent the play-house; and they will tell you they therein experience no sort of bad impression. But believe them not. Those who talk in this strain, are either deceived themselves, or impose upon you. And the cause of their illusion is that they are not accustomed to observe their heart, nor attend to what passes there. We find no trouble, while we swim with the current: resistance alone discovers the difficulty.

But, in answer to what may be urged to persuade you to go to plays, pay attention to three principles. The first of these is grounded on the palpable opposition of theatrical entertainments to the spirit of Christianity. A Christian, at baptism, makes a formal renunciation of the pomps of the devil and the vanities of the world. But where do these pomps more triumphantly reign; where are these vanities more ostentatiously exhibited, than in the illusions of the play-house? The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of modesty and of devotion. Can there be any thing more repugnant to these than the maxims of the stage? The second principle



rests on that sentence, "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it."\* Whatever may be said to the contrary, there is certainly danger, though I do not say to all in an equal degree, within the precincts of such places; and the generality of those, that attend them, pay for it with their innocence. And how can the person be excused, who voluntarily exposes himself to a peril of this consequence? Such a one either trusts too much to his strength, and thus is guilty of presumption; or, if conscious of his weakness, may be justly arraigned of folly, for wantonly rushing upon probable destruction. The last principle is this, that, by going to plays yourself, you encourage others to do the like, who thereby miserably perish. Remember what St. Paul says, that not only those who commit evil themselves, are culpable, but those also that countenance it. - Your presence would mark, in the clearest terms possible, your approbation and support.

O my God! how full is the world with danger! How many snares are laid for virtue! But by the assistance of thy grace, I may be able to avoid them all. If the world, to seduce me, holds out its treacherous baits, and seeks to dazzle me by its pomps, thou dost inform me of the peril, and empower me to escape it. Thou teachest me that my weakness will infallibly betray me; and that my only security is in flying from its vanities. I alone then should be to blame, were I so rash as to expose myself. Can I blindly regard those amusements as innocent, in which every thing is calculated to enkindle illicit passion: in which such principles are broached, as openly militate against thy law; and in which my presence would embolden others to put their salvation to the risk? If ever I should be so unhappy as to fall into such an error, vouchsafe to dispel it. Preserve me from being misled by the example of those who only are advocates for plays, because they find in them the fuel of a favourite passion; or because they are too timid to make head against the stream. Make me sensible that the more artfully vice is disguised, the more dangerous it is; and that poison is more subtle, when dexterously prepared.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must be firm in denying ourselves the entertainment of the stage.

\* Eccl. iii. 27.

## CHAPTER L.

## ON THEFT.

*Thou shalt not steal.* Exod. xx. 15.

THE Deity, to whom belongs every species of property, distributes it as he pleases. He requires us to respect the order established by his Providence; and forbids us to take from others what his bounty has given them.

This law, my dear Theophilus, is engraved on your heart. Consult that, and it will tell you that you are not to do to others, what you would not have them do to you. Was a person to seize what belongs to you, you would deem it an injustice; and so it certainly would be. But has not the same person an equal right to complain, if you violate his property. Without justice, society cannot subsist. To injure a neighbour in his possessions, therefore, whether by violence or fraud, is strictly prohibited. "The unjust," says St. Paul, "shall not possess the kingdom of God."\* Now, this sin may be committed many different ways. Let us, first, say a word or two on what may concern those of your age.

It seldom happens that young people, with any tincture of education, are so destitute of principle, as to steal from strangers. A mind endued with the sentiments of honour, recoils at the idea of so base a crime. But the youth may be found, perhaps, who does not equally respect what belongs to his parents; and who may suppose there is no great harm in stealing from them. However, it is no more permitted to rob them than others. It is equally theft, and most severely stigmatized by the Spirit of God. He declares that the person, who robs either his father or his mother, without regarding it as sinful, participates in the disposition and guilt of the murderer. How so? Because the wretched youth, who steals from his parents to gratify his passions, seems to long for their death, which appears to him procrastinated, in order to come at what they have. This disposition implies a corrupt and cruel heart, and one that is callous and dead to all the feelings of nature.

\* 1 Cor. vi. 9.

It is an injustice also to withhold from others what they have a right to challenge of us ; as debts in regard to creditors, wages to servants, or their hire to workmen. "If any man shall have done any work for thee," says Toby to his son, "immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of the servant stay with thee."\* Again, it is an injustice not to restore whatever may have been intrusted to you ; to keep any thing found, without making due inquiry for its rightful owner ; and, in fine, to do a neighbour any kind of harm in his property, by destroying, or spoiling it ; whether the mischief occasioned be effected by yourself, or whether it be done him by others, at your instigation.

And observe, my child, whenever we have wronged a person, it is not sufficient to be sorry for it, and to ask pardon of God. The thing taken must be restored, and the damage made good. Without restitution, it is vain to expect forgiveness, or to hope for salvation. There is no entering into heaven with other people's property. What then, you will say, shall I be eternally ruined, if, after injuring a neighbour, I find myself so circumstanced as not to be able to make him amends for it? No: God does not command impossibilities. In this case, it suffices to be sincerely desirous to acquit yourself of this obligation, as soon as may be in your power to use your best endeavours to discharge it completely.

Thou, O God! dost forbid me to hurt my neighbour's goods ; and, if it should happen that I commit an injustice, thou dost enjoin me to repair it. I feel the equity of this law, and submit to it cordially. I wish others to be just to me: I shall therefore be just to them. Thanks to that integrity, which thou hast implanted in my breast, and to the good education, thy Providence procures me, that I abhor the thoughts of stealing, and that there is not a vice, to which I feel a stronger aversion. Confirm these good dispositions ; and grant I may never deviate from the rules of strict probity ; that, in whatever station of life, they may regulate my conduct, and that I may sanctify this probity by the principles of religion ; without this, it would be but natural and altogether human ; and, although it might attract the good opinion of men, it could not deserve a recompense from the hands of thy justice.

\* Tob. iv. 15.

*The Practical Inference.*

That a Christian honesty should direct us in all things:

---

## CHAPTER LI.

## ON LYING.

*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*  
Exod. xx. 17.

God is truth itself. Whatever, therefore, offends against the dictates of truth, is injurious to God. And this is the reason why he so repeatedly forbids us to utter what is false.

"Putting away lying," says the Apostle, "speak ye the truth every man with his neighbour."\* The sacred oracles assure us that "The mouth that believeth killeth the soul,"† "Thou God will destroy all that speak a lie."‡ This vice is repugnant to the purposes of society. For why was speech given us, but to communicate our ideas, and mutually impart our thoughts? It is, therefore, an abuse of this privilege, to use it to convey a meaning which we know to be false. And this principle is so evident, that the Heathens themselves were conscious of its force, and that many of them adhered to it with a rigid exactness. It is related of one of the most distinguished among them, that such was his love and respect for truth, that he could not think it lawful to exceed its bounds, even in laughing and jesting; and of a second, that he never told a lie himself, nor would suffer it in others, without expressing his displeasure. What a shame that Christians should be less scrupulous than Heathens, on an article of such moment! How happens it that children, brought up in the arms of virtue, should consider a lie as nothing; have recourse to it for every trifle, and even make it a matter of amusement and sport?

But a lie, which in itself is so odious, becomes far more criminal, when it injures a neighbour, or tends wrongfully to

\* Eph. iv. 25.

† Wisdom l. 11.

‡ Ps. v. 7.

defame him. As for example, when one attributes a vice to him, with which he is not tainted, or a fault, that he has not committed: and this is termed *calumny*. So foul is the malignity attached to this crime, that the mention of it is enough to shock a good heart. "The tongue of the calumniator," says the Spirit of Wisdom, "is a keen edged sword, that inflicts deadly wounds; and his mouth distils a poison more venomous than that of the viper." For it attacks not only the fortune, but also the character of a person; a thing the most dear to him, and the most estimable in life.

But what ultimately completes the atrociousness of this crime is when a calumny is advanced in the face of the legislature, and confirmed by an oath. The person who thus solemnly bears testimony to a falsehood, besides a cruel injustice to an innocent fellow-creature, whom his perjury goes to ruin, most impiously insults the Deity, whose sacred name he profanes. As far as in his power, he makes God an accomplice in his guilt, and prostitutes his veracity to the support of abandoned vice. Such was the conduct of the two old wretches, that accused the chaste Susanna. This virtuous woman, whose opposition to their base designs had excited their rage, must undoubtedly have been the victim of their slanderous charges, had not God raised up Daniel, and filled him with his Spirit, to unmask their impostures, and rescue the oppressed. Her iniquitous accusers were fortunately detected, and punished with death, as their villany merited.

And this is the fate, to which all are exposed, who bear false witness against their neighbour. God frequently permits the calumny to be discovered, and the like punishment to overtake the detestable calumniators, as they themselves wished to draw on the heads of the innocent. But although they should escape the fallible eye of man, they could not evade that of a rigorous judge, from whom nothing is concealed. Nor let them hope to appease him by a secret repentance or sterile tears. The injustice committed, with its whole train of consequences, must be fully compensated. They must re-establish that honour, which they have iniquitously violated: a thing, that cannot be done without criminating themselves. Should their own reputation be the forfeit of their calumny, even this must be sacrificed, to restore that of their neighbour, when injuriously tarnished. See,

then, Theophilus, how difficult it is to obtain the forgiveness of this crime, and learn to avoid it.

Far from me, O God! be that horrid malignity, which would urge me unjustly to accuse a fellow-creature. By an effect of thy grace, the very thought of it chills me. But I feel not the like abhorrence and detestation of a lie; a vice but too common in those of my age; which, however, is offensive and odious in thy sight. And what can I want more to make it odious to myself? The usual occasion of it is that I wish to hide my own faults, and those of my companions. But how great my delusion, when, with the design of concealing an offence of small importance, I commit another, that deserves the most rigid punishment! I will henceforth confess candidly whatever fault I may fall into; and I will never tell a falsehood to disguise or extenuate it. A sincere avowal will be its best reparation, and the most effectual means of procuring thy forgiveness. And, although I may have reason to look for a reprimand, I will rather suffer it patiently, than infringe thy commandment. Support me, O God! in these virtuous sentiments; and permit me not to deviate from the line of strict truth.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should never tell a lie deliberately and knowingly.

---

## CHAPTER LII.

### ON DETRACTION.

*Brethren, detract not one another.* St. James iv. 11.

DETRACTION consists in revealing to others the secret faults of our neighbour. The matter, thus related, is supposed to be true; or else it would be calumny; but it is likewise unknown. As long as his misconduct, in whatever line it be, continues undivulged, he retains his reputation, of which the discovery of it to the world unjustly deprives him. Of course, it is a sin to reveal his hidden faults. It is violating

the command of God, who most positively enjoins us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Should we like to have our faults held up to the public eye? Unquestionably, we should not. Let us learn, therefore, to throw a veil over those of our fellow members.

The sacred oracles number detraction among the crimes, that exclude from heaven. St. Paul assures us that "The detractor shall not inherit the kingdom of God." St. James, inflamed with zeal against this detestable vice, energetically paints it in colours the most odious. "Behold how small a fire what a great wood it kindleth! and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity."\* Like a spark, carried abroad by the boisterous wind, detraction spreads havoc; sets every thing on flame, and blackens, at least, the character which it cannot consume. It is the pest of society, subversive of peace, and the parent of confusion wheresoever it reaches. It is a malignant source of hatred and revenge; an execrable collection of every thing baneful.

The detractor is guilty of all the sins, that his crime gives birth to. He sins in them, who repeat the matter after him; and he sins even in those, that wilfully listen to him. For observe, it is forbidden not only to speak ill of a neighbour, but also to lend an ear to defamatory talk. Were there no hearers, there would be no detractors. But of all kinds of defamation, the basest is that, by which one person relates to another what a third may have spoken, or committed against him. This sort of repetition, which we usually call *tale-bearing*, almost always produces such a spirit of animosity, and desire of revenge, as terminate in lasting and irreconcilable enmity. The party accused, ignorant of what has been said, can neither justify nor explain himself. The malice of such secret whisperers is traced in Holy Writ in the following terms: "The words of the tale-bearer appear simple and uninteresting; but they silently sink into the bottom of the heart." And to show how nefarious it is, the sacred penman subjoins: "There are six things, that the Lord hates, and the seventh he detests; and this seventh is the person, who sows discord among his brethren." At all times, then, Theophilus, follow the advice of the Holy Ghost: "Have you heard any thing injurious or prejudicial to your neighbour? Repeat it not; but let it die within you."

\* St. James iii. 5, 6.

Remark, however, that it is lawful to disclose the faults of another, to those, who, by their station, are authorized to correct them; especially when such faults are likely to prove contagious. In this case, they may, and ought to be revealed, to prevent farther mischief. For instance, you are acquainted with the ill-conduct and misbehaviour of a companion; you know that he corrupts others, by his discourse and bad example. You are then obliged to inform his superiors; and, so far from trenching on charity, by thus disclosing his defects, you are thereby fulfilling its most pressing obligations. For it is loving our neighbour truly, to preserve him from the ruin into which he is plunging himself, and precipitating others. It is the perfection of charity to prefer his salvation, and that of those he lives with, to every other consideration.

Though detraction, in itself, be not so criminal as calumny, it is more pernicious in its consequences; since the mischief, it occasions, is almost irreparable. In fact, should we have imputed a fault to a person wrongfully, we may, and are bound, to retract our words. By recantation, we heal the wound, and re-establish his good name. But when the evil divulged is true, we cannot unsay it: for this would be telling a lie, which, in no case, is allowable. On this account, though we were to repent of the sin, it would be scarcely possible to restore him what we were the occasion of his losing. We are obliged, however, to make him what satisfaction we can, by saying all the good we know of him; thereby do away, or, at least, to diminish the injurious impressions, our defamation may have caused.

I see, O God! how offensive it is to reveal without necessity, the hidden faults of my neighbour, and to tarnish his reputation. I now firmly resolve to avoid this crime, of which the consequences are so fatal, and so hard to repair. Preserve me, I beseech thee, from that wretched malevolence, which disposes us to detract and speak ill of one another. Remove from me that levity, which leads me so often to give a loose to my tongue. Put a guard upon my lips, that not a word may escape them to the prejudice of others. But it is insufficient not to censure and detract them myself. Thou forbiddest me, besides, to listen to those that do so. Teach me how to behave on all such occurrences; to turn the conversation, or, at least, by reserve, to show my displeasure; and, if possible, to retire from such dangerous company. At



these times, be thou my light, to direct me what to do; and my strength, to enable me to execute it boldly.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should never speak ill of any one.

CHAPTER LIII.

ON RASH JUDGMENT.

*Judge not, and you shall not be judged: condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.* Luke vi. 37.

God forbids us, Theophilus, not only to speak ill of our neighbour, but also to harbour a bad opinion of him, on light or imperfect grounds. "Judge not hastily," says Christ; "but judge according to justice."

Wherefore we are not allowed to judge our brother by conjectural surmises or equivocal appearances. To conclude him guilty, without sufficient proof, is an unjustifiable rashness, which necessarily exposes us to condemn the innocent. He has a right to our esteem, until he be convicted; and to withdraw it from him, without well-founded reasons, is doing him an injury. The crime of rash judgment, therefore, is contrary to justice. Nor is it less so to charity. This latter virtue, the characteristic of Christianity, inclines us to think advantageously of, and to put a favourable construction on the actions of other people; excusing and palliating what is not manifestly wrong in them. "Charity," St. Paul says, "thinks no evil." It only then sees a fault, when convincingly clear; and only then gives credit to it, when evidently proved. And to decide by this rule, let us put ourselves in our neighbour's place. Should we like, without ample grounds, be thought guilty of a bad action, or subject to a particular defect? That we should not, is indubitable. Let us avoid, therefore, doing to others what we are unwilling they should do to us.

But our judgment would be still rasher, and by many

degrees more criminal, were we to attribute bad intentions to works laudable in themselves; and to suppose a vicious principle, where the action is uncensurable. Nevertheless, nothing is more common than this malignity of mind, which seeks to detract from what is apparently good, by assigning improper motives to it. Is a person regular in his conduct, and attentive to his duties? They, that want the courage to imitate him, regard him as a hypocrite, who only acts this part, to gain the esteem of his superiors. But to judge thus of intentions and the secret dispositions of the mind, is it not usurping the place of God, who alone can see the heart, and be acquainted with its springs? Besides, what opinion must we have of him, who suspects others to be so corrupted and so infamously base? A bad heart alone can suppose such dissimulation.

Yes, this fund of malevolence, which is so ready to discover vice, under the semblance of virtue can only, I say, proceed from a black and tainted heart. The good man thinks differently. Sincere himself, he believes others to be so equally. He is edified at a behaviour, which accords with regularity, and never imagines the garb of piety to be the cloak of irreligion. His thoughts are employed on the consideration of his own defects: he pays no attention to those of his neighbour, and, by this prudent conduct, he pre-engages in his favour the tribunal of the Deity. For Christ has promised to judge us, as we judge our brethren. This comfortable reflection was the solace of an ancient anchorite at the hour of his death. During life, he had not been remarkable for any particular degree of zeal: notwithstanding which, when about to leave the world, he appeared uncommonly tranquil. His Superior, apprehensive this might be the effect of a mistaken confidence, inquired his reasons. "My security," replied the dying man, "is founded on the words of Christ. I never have judged, much less condemned, any one; and the Son of God has assured us that we shall not be judged ourselves, unless we judge others."

Alas! how shall I presume, O Lord! to censure my neighbour, when I have so many faults, wherewith to reproach myself? For these alone shall I be responsible at the bar of thy justice. These alone, should I condemn, therefore, to deprecate thy wrath. Can I wish, by blaming my brethren, to expose myself to the danger of being rejected by thee? I stand in need of mercy, and thou dost offer it on easy terms;

viz. on the condition that I refrain from judging others. My salvation then is in my own hands; and I will strive to profit by it. Indulgent to my neighbour, to myself only will I be severe. I will keep my eyes open to my own defects, and shut to the infirmities and imperfections of other people. I will excuse their faults: and so far from ascribing sinister motives to the good actions, I see them do, I will be edified by their conduct, and copy them.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should always think favourably of the words and actions of our neighbour.

---

CHAPTER LIV.

ON IMMODEST THOUGHTS.

*With all watchfulness keep thy heart.* Prov. iv. 23.  
*Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.*  
 Math. v. 8.

HAVING positively forbidden every act of impurity, God prohibits, in like manner, all the thoughts and desires of it. And this prohibition Christ confirms in the following words: "You have heard that it was said to them of old; Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you that whoever shall look on a woman, to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."\*

Think not, then, Theophilus, that, to fulfil the law of God, it is enough to refrain from impure and unchaste actions. Such desires are also criminal. God, *who searches the reins*, will not be satisfied with an outward purity. He no less requires the purity of the heart. He will not allow us to desire what he forbids us to do. The very thought of the sin makes us culpable in his eyes, when deliberate and voluntary; that is to say, when we dwell upon it with reflection, and take a wilful pleasure in it. "Perverse thoughts," says

\* Math. v. 27, 28.

the Scripture, "separate from God ;"\* and, of course, kill the soul, unless resolutely rejected. The divine law, therefore, attacks the very root of the evil, and stifles it in its birth. It is not usual all at once to go so far as criminal actions ; there is a gradation even in vice. The mischief begins by indecent thoughts, entertained with satisfaction : to these succeed desires, and to desires external acts. "From the heart," Christ says, "come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, etc."† At the head of the foul list he places evil thoughts : inasmuch as they are the soul and principle of vice. The true way, therefore, to prevent the illicit desires of the heart is to reject bad thoughts ; and the true way to obviate the commission of lawless actions is to suppress the desires of them.

But how, you will say, will we preserve ourselves from the intrusion of bad thoughts ? You cannot, I confess, my child, prevent their molesting you ; but you may hinder yourself from consenting to them. Your being troubled with such ideas depends not on you : but it depends on you not to give occasion to, or to take pleasure in them, when they come. Observe, I have told you that the thought of evil is a crime : but I mean only when it is free, and wilfully indulged. If you give no occasion to such thoughts, whether by reading dangerous books, by a too great familiarity of conversation, by unguarded looks and actions ; or if, as soon as they present themselves, you reject and expel them, no guilt will attach to you from them : for without liberty and consent there can be no sin. They are temptations indeed : but temptation is not a crime. An undisturbed peace, entirely exempt from combats, is not to be expected. Virtue does not consist in not feeling, but in resisting courageously, the assaults of our passions. Remember my advice, then. Never give occasion to bad thoughts : and if, in spite of your vigilance, they obtrude themselves upon you, turn your attention from them, raise your heart to God, and immediately apply to something interesting and useful.

A powerful remedy against these suggestions is to find employment for the mind, and never to permit it to be idle. Such is the counsel of St. Jerom, who practised it himself. Be but observant of this rule, and you will have nothing to apprehend. If the devil importunes you, listen not to him,

\* Wisdom i. 3.

† Mark xv. 19.

and your victory will be secure. Throw yourself into the arms of God: he will be your protector, and the support of your infirmity. The temptation you have combated, so far from aggrieving you, will become the matter of your triumph, and your constancy will merit for you an immortal crown of glory.

Thou seest, O Lord! the trials, I am perpetually exposed to. Thoughts, which thy law condemns, intrude upon my mind: imaginations, that I detest, offer violence to my heart. My resistance shall be resolute: but thou knowest my weakness, and the strength of my adversary. His reiterated attacks make me tremble for my safety. O God! my hope! Withdraw not thyself from me. Say to my soul, *I am thy force and thy safeguard*. Thou alone canst dispel the illusions of Satan, that threaten my salvation. Arise, then, O Lord! and my enemies shall be dispersed. Command; and my soul shall recover its tranquillity. Thou hast promised not to suffer me to be tempted above my strength. I shall be sure to conquer, if but faithful to thy grace.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should turn away our minds, at the first appearance of immodest thoughts.

---

## CHAPTER LV.

### ON COVETOUS DESIRES.

*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; nor any thing that is his.* Exod. xx. 17.

As the Deity had before prohibited to take, or retain the property of other people; so he here forbids us to covet or desire it. But note the difference between the law of God and that of man. The latter regulates external actions only; because the outside alone is visible to man: while the former reaches to desires and the secret wishes of the mind; because the deepest recesses of the heart are open to the eyes of God.

But you conceive, I hope, that it is not forbidden to desire the goods of others, when you purpose to get possession of them by fair and lawful means. Otherwise, no sort of commerce or traffic would be licit. A person, that buys a house, or whatever else you please, desires it indeed: but this desire is allowable, when the means, used to acquire it, are conformable to law and equity.

What therefore is prohibited, is to covet the goods and property of others, when they are unwilling to part with them. Such was the crime of Achab, which God punished so severely. To extend his demesne, he wished to get possession of the vineyard of Naboth. This the latter would not sell, it being the inheritance of his family. Irritated by the refusal, the king suborned false witnesses; had him sentenced to death for supposititious crimes, and seized on his vineyard. Again, what is forbidden in this place is the inordinate love of riches; an eagerness to procure them; that greediness of wealth, which St. Paul styles the root and the source of all evils, and which God, by the Prophet, anathematizes in these terms, "Wo to you, that add house to house, and land to land, as if the earth was intended for your use alone."

I am sensible this is not the vice, 'Theophilus, of those of your age. But there is a period, when this passion takes place of diversions and infantile amusements; and it is not improper to warn you against its future attempts. Nothing then, I say, is more opposite to the spirit of the Gospel, than this thirst after riches; which, intent upon amassing, is never satisfied with God's liberality; and which, from an ideal apprehension of coming to want, is perpetually accumulating, as if we were never to die. The man, that is a slave to this miserable passion, is wholly engrossed with its restless avidity. He thinks of it in the day; he broods over it at night, and to its gnawing pangs he sacrifices his health and his life. From his eagerness to grasp a happiness, which imagination represents to him as consisting in wealth, he becomes piteously wretched, and wastes his years in tortures, that death alone ends.

And what acts of fraud and palpable injustice are not produced by this vice? Conscience and salvation are considered as nothing, provided money be gained. In a word, money is the only god whom the miser worships. For which reason, St. Paul stigmatizes this passion with the name of *Idolatry*. And for the same reason we are assured by Christ

that we *cannot serve two masters*; that we *cannot love God and Mammon* together. Not that the Almighty forbids us to possess riches; since it is his providence that bestows them. But he forbids us to be possessed by them, that is, to settle our affections on them, and to place our happiness in their enjoyment. It is not wealth itself, that will be the cause of our damnation, but the inordinate desire of obtaining it. And what, in fact, is it, that we long for so ardently? Transient, perishable riches, which cost an infinity of pains to acquire, and no less solicitude to preserve;—riches, of which we shall certainly be deprived at last, without the power of retaining, or taking away any part of them; finally, riches, the loss of which, when compelled to forsake them, will be severe in proportion to the attachment, we bore them. Can such things, as these, be productive of happiness? The advice, therefore, of David, is commendable and proper: “If riches abound, set not your heart upon them.”\* And if you have them not, my child, neither long for, nor covet them, according to the counsel of your Saviour: “Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.”†

Permit me not, O God! to become a prey to the vice of avarice. If thou art pleased to give me riches, keep my heart from being attached to them, and teach me to use them for the purposes of thy service. If thou thinkest proper to withhold them from me, may I be content with the lot, which thy providence assigns me. The riches, that I ask of thee, are neither silver nor gold, which, at best, would not add to my happiness, and perchance, by my abuse of them, might prove the occasion of my ruin. But what I earnestly solicit is thy grace, O Lord! in this life and thy glory in the next. This is that firm and desirable blessing, which alone I ought to covet and to endeavour to acquire. If even poverty be my portion, I shall still be rich enough, if I do but fear thee, and fulfil thy commandments. This, of all treasures is the first, and which I do not stick to prefer to every temporal advantage.

\* Ps. lxi, 11.

† Math. vi. 19—21.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should be content with what we have.

---

## CHAPTER LVI.

ON THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH: AND FIRST, ON THE  
OBSERVANCE OF HOLYDAYS.

CHRIST has authorized his Church to make what ordinances, she may deem necessary; and has enjoined us to obey her. Those only does God own for his children, who respect her as a mother.

This power is invested in her pastors, whom he appoints to direct us. Of them Christ has said: "He, that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."\* And in another passage: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."† This power, delegated to her thus by Christ, the Church has at all times exercised. From the commencement of Christianity, the Apostles took upon them to frame regulations, the observance of which St. Paul endeavoured to inculcate, in his various expeditions, and the faithful, to whom he proposed them, as readily submitted to. It is therefore incumbent on us likewise to receive with respect the different ordinances of the Church. It would be disobeying God himself to be undutiful to those, that he commissions to govern us.

The precepts of the Church may be reduced to six, whose obligation is universal. The first of them enacts that we keep holy the festivals, which are interspersed throughout the year, by refraining from servile works, and by devoting such days to the calls of religion. Some of these feasts are ordained to commemorate the mysteries of our Redeemer; such as his incarnation, his nativity, his circumcision, his manifestation to the Gentiles; his passion and death, his resurrection and ascension, the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the institution of the Eucharist. Others are designed to

\* Luke x. 16.

† Math. xviii. 17.



honour, in the Virgin Mary and the Saints, the graces God conferred on them, during their abode on earth, and the bliss he now crowns them with, in the raptures of heaven.

In the old law, the Deity appointed for the Israelites a certain number of feasts, to perpetuate the remembrance of his exertions in their behalf; and it is on this divine model that the Christian Church also has instituted her festivals. Her intention therein is to honour the Almighty, to instruct the faithful, and to animate their devotion, by setting before their eyes, in the course of the year, the blessings of God and the examples of the Saints. The solemnity of the divine office, the aptitude of the ceremonies, and the exhortations of the ministers, are perfectly calculated to fan the flame of piety, and to invigorate those sentiments of gratitude and love, that we owe to the Supreme Being. They afford likewise to the ignorant an opportunity of instruction, whereby to become acquainted with the history of each festival. This duty the Church prescribes to her pastors; and enjoins parents to take care that such incentives to religion be not unknown to their children. God himself inculcated this to the Jews. Having ordered them to immolate the paschal lamb, and to celebrate yearly the feast of unleaven bread, he added the reason: "When your children shall say to you: what is the meaning of this service? You shall say to them: it is the victim of the passage of the Lord; when he passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, striking the Egyptians, and saving our houses."<sup>77\*</sup>

Wherefore, Theophilus, to sanctify the holydays, you should unite with the Church, study the mystery of the day, bless the Lord for his mercies, and solicit a share in them. And if it be a festival sacred to the memory of the blessed Mary or the Saints, you should endeavour to excite yourself to an imitation of their virtues; that, by copying their lives, you may deserve to be associated to a participation of their bliss; and for this purpose, implore their intercession at the throne of grace; thence to obtain that assistance, which your necessities demand.

O God! how worthy of respect are the laws of that Church which thou hast established for our guidance! The obligations, she lays upon us, are enjoined in thy name and by virtue of thy authority. I bow to them, therefore, with all possible

Exod. xii. 26, 27.

deference. Enable me by thy grace, to conform to her intentions in the celebration of Holydays. The ends, she proposes, is to confirm us in the knowledge and belief of the mysteries, which thou hast operated in our favour; to renew in us those sentiments of affection and gratitude, that we owe thee for so many blessings, and to encourage us to trace the steps, that will conduct us to thee. Grant that I may ever be solicitous to correspond with her views. Give me the requisite dispositions to reap the fruit, she designs by the institution of her festivals; that, by remembering these mysteries were accomplished for my sake, I may strive to dispose myself to partake in their effects.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should inform ourselves of the subject and history of each feast; and make it, that day, the matter of our devotion.

---

## CHAPTER LVII.

### ON THE OBLIGATION OF HEARING MASS ON SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS.

OF all the exercises of piety, to which we are obliged on Sundays and Holydays, that of hearing Mass is the most essential; and the Church has accordingly specially commanded this.

The sacrifice of the Mass is the sublimest act of worship, and that, which renders to the Deity the most perfect tribute of honour. The obligation of offering it, on days appropriated to his service, is coeval with the Church. We read in the acts of the Apostles, that on the first day of the week, which we at present term Sunday, the faithful assembled to break bread; that is, to offer the sacred victim, and to partake in the distribution of it. All the writings, that relate to the first ages of Christianity, make mention of the holy mysteries that were celebrated on Sundays. In them we see the order and the fervour of those meetings; and we there find, to our

shall confess his sins, to his own pastor, at least once a year."

And observe, Theophilus, the Church hereby lays two distinct injunctions on us. First, to confess our sins once, at least, annually, when capacitated so to do by age and discretion; that is to say, when capable of discriminating between good and evil: and secondly, to make this confession to our own lawful pastor. By this twofold regulation, she was desirous to obviate two different abuses. In the first place, to limit those, who for many years absented themselves from the tribunal of penance, and cankered in their vicious habits: and in the second, to prevent us from recurring purposely to strangers, with a view to obtain more easily the sentence of absolution, without amending our lives.

Wherefore, to satisfy this precept, you must repair, once a year at least, to the penitential tribunal, and make a faithful confession of your sins to your own proper pastor; unless he gives you leave to make it to another priest. In Catholic countries, this restrictive rule is generally adopted, that they, who, for particular reasons, confess to any other, than their legitimate pastor, are obliged to present to him a certificate of their confession. But in our situation, where circumstances do not permit such a regularity of method, it seems allowed to confess to any priest acknowledged and empowered by the bishop. The confession must be made however.

And, although the church exacts but one confession, annually, that she may give us no disgust; she desires, nevertheless, that we have recourse to it much oftener. This desire she intimates sufficiently by those words, *at least*, which she subjoins to the precept. Wherefore, though, to obey her commands, it absolutely suffices to confess once a year; yet this is by no means sufficient to correspond with her intentions; especially when one has had the misfortune to fall into mortal sin. God wills that such, as are conscious of this evil, arise without delay. In this unhappy case, therefore, they are bound to address themselves to some prudent director, to consult his advice on the steps to be taken. The precept of the Church, so far from impeding their timely conversion, only goes to prevent them from becoming rooted in their crimes. Sin is a wound of the soul. When wounded in body, do we neglect for any time to seek for a remedy? It is an illness, infinitely more dangerous than any, to which

the body is liable. When this is attacked, do we wait a whole year without calling in help?

Besides, experience shows that one confession a year is not sufficient to the support of a spiritual life. They, that confine themselves to this, are too frequently engaged in habits of vice, which they do not choose to relinquish; and the confession, they then make, is of a piece with the rest. By which means, this commandment of the Church is still left unsatisfied. For, while she enjoins her children this annual confession, she obliges them also to approach the seat of repentance with suitable dispositions. To present one's self at the confessional without sufficient examination, or a sincere contrition, is not complying with her orders. On the contrary, it is increasing the load, one is already oppressed with.

You will ask me, perhaps, at what time the Church requires us to discharge this obligation? The precise time she has not fixed. But, as she orders us, by the very same canon, to communicate at Easter, it is plain she desires this confession should be made so, as to serve for a preparation to the paschal communion. Present yourself, therefore, at the tribunal of reconciliation before the conclusion of Lent, and inquire of your director how to prepare for that great work.

Thou hast given us, O Lord! a cure for the disorders of the soul. The sacrament of penance is a salutary bath, in which we are happily cleansed from the defilements of sin. The Church commands us to resort to it humbly, at least once in the year. Not but that she wishes us to frequent it much oftener: but she desires to be indulgent to the weakness of her children. And is it possible that a law so considerate and mild should still find transgressors? Shall I myself be one of the number? No, my God! I will never neglect a remedy, which thy Church offers so kindly. Neither will I restrict myself to what she commands; but I will fulfil her intentions. As soon as I perceive my conscience defiled with the guilt of sin, I will repair without delay to this purificative laver. Can I continue wilfully in a state, wherein I feel myself to be thy enemy and an object of thy aversion? I know that sin, unretracted, leads gradually to other sins. I will therefore hasten to thy minister, to ease my wounded conscience, and to be reconciled to thee.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should have recourse to confession, when conscious of mortal sin.

---

## CHAPTER LIX.

## ON THE PASCHAL COMMUNION.

THE fourth precept of the Church is contained in the words, that directly follow those already recited from the Council of Lateran: viz. "Let each one respectively receive, at least at the feast of Easter, the sacrament of the Eucharist; unless, by the advice of his director, and for approved of reasons, he abstain from it for a time. If he fail so to do, let the entrance of the Church be forbidden him, during life; and, after his death, let him be deprived of Christian burial."

Judge, my dear Theophilus, of the consequence of this precept, by the threats fulminated on such, as presume to overlook it. If our indulgent mother decrees the most direful penalties against such of her children, as neglect to comply with this paschal obligation, it is because she knows the necessity under which they labour, of receiving this celestial aliment. She has learned from Christ himself, that, unless we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we shall have no life in us. For which reason, she commands all the faithful, when capable of discrimination, to communicate once a year at least, within the paschal term; that is to say, between Palm-Sunday, and Low-Sunday, each of them included; and that with the respect and devotion due to this venerable sacrament.

What induced the Church to lay this obligation on her children, was the indifference of too many of them for this life-giving food. The primitive Christians communicated frequently. They considered the Eucharist as the daily bread of their souls, and had no greater cause of grief than to be deprived of the use of it. In course of time, charity growing cold, this divine sacrament was neglected, and many became so tepid, as to let whole years elapse without

approaching the holy table. To put a stop to so great an evil, the Church issued her mandate that all her children, under the most rigorous menaces, should, at least at Easter, receive the blessed Eucharist. But although she enjoins them only to communicate once in the year, her wish is, nevertheless, that they do it much oftener; and particularly on the feasts, which she has instituted for our sanctification. By communicating at Easter, therefore, we literally accomplish the precept of the Church; but if we limit ourselves to this, we shall fall short of her desires. In fact, it is hardly to be supposed that one single communion, in the course of twelve months, can be sufficient to maintain us in the life of grace. It is even to be feared that they, who are so indifferent about this most interesting work, do not satisfy the precept. Because they expose themselves to the danger of communicating unworthily: and an unworthy communion, so far from fulfilling the injunctions of the Church, is an insult to her authority and a most grievous sacrilege.

The Church, moreover, requires that we communicate *with respect*; which respect consists principally in bringing to the sacred banquet a conscience uncontaminated by mortal sin. It is to evince this intention, that she would have us postpone our paschal communion, whenever there be a reasonable and just occasion for it: among which occasions, the want of an opportunity of purifying ourselves properly is to be numbered in the first place. But you must observe that the time of this delay should be employed in preparation, and be made as short as possible. For, although the term allotted for the performance of this duty be finally closed, yet the obligation subsists, until religiously discharged. It is a debt, from which we are not released by having passed over the stated period; but which continues in force against us, till duly acquitted.

This law of the Church, O God! is too much to my advantage to permit me to transgress it. For what a happiness is it for me to have a seat at thy table, to receive thy sacred body, and to be united to thee, in a manner the most intimate! O incomprehensible blessing! So far from being satisfied with the letter of the precept, I will run frequently to thy altar, with all possible eagerness. Thou desirest, dear Lord! and, actuated by thy spirit, the Church recommends to me to present myself often at thy adorable banquet. This I will endeavour to do; especially at the seasons

devoted to piety. The more frequently I partake of this bread of Angels, the more happy shall I be. Should my unworthiness compel thy minister to seclude me from it for a time, I will humbly acquiesce in his prudent advice; and will employ the delay in bemoaning my misery, in purifying my conscience, and in fitting myself, as soon as possible, to be re-admitted to thy mysteries.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should do our best to communicate, not only at Easter, but also on each festival.

## CHAPTER LX.

### ON THE PRECEPT OF FASTING.

THE Church commands us to fast throughout the season of *Lent*, some certain *Vigils*, and three days at the commencement of each quarter of the year, which are regularly marked, and usually called *Ember Days*. Fasting consists in making one meal only in the course of the day, and that not before noon, and in abstaining at those times from whatever food the Church prohibits.

We denominate *Lent* the forty days preceding the festival of Easter; and the fast of this period is of the most early date, even of Apostolic institution. What a sanction does this law receive from an origin so remote, and so truly respectable! What an additional support from a practice so general, and so uniformly maintained! The fast of lent was established in imitation of that of our Saviour, and to prepare us to celebrate the paschal solemnity. It was always observed with greater rigour than the other fasts; in which the meal allowed was taken after the canonical hour of *None*, that is, about three in the afternoon: whereas, in lent, it was deferred till the conclusion of *Vespers*, or about six in the evening.

Throughout this penitential season, the faithful lived in retirement, interrupting their rest at night with tears of com-

punction; spending a considerable part of the day in prayer and pious reading, and feeding the poor with the savings, they made from themselves. This zeal was perpetuated through a succession of ages. But relaxation crept in at length. The meal, by degrees, was forwarded to noon; when, still to retain the appearance of ancient discipline, the evening office was advanced; which is the reason why, in lent, vespers are said before dinner. At the same time, a slight refreshment towards night began to be introduced, as a help to keep the fast; and this the Church at present tolerates, under the name of a *collation*; provided, however, it be small, and cannot be regarded in the light of a meal. For it is essential to the fast that one only meal be taken in the day.

The *Ember-days* were appointed with a view to consecrate, by works of penance, the four seasons of the year; to solicit the blessing of God on the fruits of the earth, and to implore him to provide his Church with suitable ministers; for it is at these times, in general, that ordinations are conferred. Lastly, *Vigils* are days, which precede the principal feasts; and they obtain this appellation, because, formerly, the faithful met on the eve of the great solemnities, and spent a part of the night in the exercises of devotion, as still is the practice on the eve of Christmas. We fast on these occasions, the better to dispose ourselves to celebrate the festivals, and to reap from them the advantages, designed by their institution.

The law of fasting is general and obligatory on all. They alone are exempted, whom either age, infirmities, or laborious employments incapacitate from observing it. Of course, it is a grievous sin not to keep the fasts prescribed, unless lawfully dispensed with. To break them, without necessity, is to sin against God himself, who commands us to obey his Church. Nor let any one presume to arrogate the power of dispensing with himself. The authority, which enacts the law, is alone competent to mitigate it. And though many dare openly to violate this precept, it still exists; nor does the number of those, that infringe, either annul or invalidate it.

It is true, my Theophilus, that, by the orders of the Church, you are not obligated to fast, till arrived at an age, when, the constitution being settled, no bad effects are to be feared from it. Such is the consideration of that tender mother,



who is ever solicitous for the welfare of her children. But, for this very reason, you should be more exact in obeying her, when you can without risk. And though, in rigour, no body is obliged to fast till the age of twenty-one; it is, nevertheless, proper that young people should habituate themselves, in lighter things, to the practice of mortification; as, for instance, by retrenching something from their meals, or by debarring themselves little niceties, the loss of which cannot prejudice their health. The like may be said of those, who, on account of infirmity or any other reasonable impediment, are dispensed with from fasting. If not in a capacity to satisfy this duty in its full extent, they ought to fulfil it in part at least, and to unite themselves in spirit with the intentions of the Church; endeavouring by other good works to compensate their deficiencies in this particular regard.

How much, O God! have we degenerated from the pious zeal of our ancestors! Comparatively with theirs, our afflictions are nothing. The most rigid austerities were scarce sufficient for their fervour: and we think too much of the slightest self-denials. Renew, O Lord! among us that spirit of penance, by which they were actuated. Our crimes are not less heinous, nor our passions less stubborn. Why then should we be more unwilling to do penance, than they were? Make us, at least, discharge with punctuality that little, the Church demands of us. However easy fasting be rendered by the practice of the present times, still thou art pleased to be contented with it: and that ours may receive its full efficacy, we here unite it with thine. If the tenderness of my age exempts me from the obligation of fasting, let me take, at least, some part in the general atonement; and let me supply for what is wanting by readiness of mind, by a strict guard upon my conduct, by assiduous prayer, and, above all, by a steady application and a perfect obedience.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should be regular in fasting, when of an age so to do; and, previously to that time, attentive to mortify ourselves in things of smaller moment.

## CHAPTER LXI.

## ON THE PRECEPT OF ABSTINENCE.

By this regulation, the Church prohibits the use of flesh meat, on the Fridays and Saturdays of each week in the year.

The respect we owe to that authority from which this precept is derived, and the collateral motives, on which it is grounded, concur alike in recommending it to our observance. It is the Church, that prescribes it in the name of Jesus Christ. And what are her views therein? To nourish in her children that spirit of mortification, which the Son of God, during life, never ceased to inculcate, and which is the summary abridgement of all his morality: to weaken the passions, by depressing the body: to give us an opportunity of cancelling our past offences, and of meriting his support under future attacks. We are sinners; and, as such, obliged to do penance. We are sick; and ought, of course, to recur to proper remedies. We all have sins to expiate; and this is to be done by the practice of self-denial, which appeases the divine justice. We all have passions to tame; and we can only subdue them, by retrenching their incentives.

The Church, who knows the need we have of this useful medicine, and, at the same time, perceives our strong aversion to it, comes in kindly to our relief; and, that she may engage us more effectually to acquiesce in her designs, makes us a formal command of what is so much to our advantage. In this, she acts like an affectionate mother, who, seeing the repugnance of her children to take a bitter, but necessary, draught, interposes her authority, to reconcile them to it.

But, besides this general view in the precept of abstinence, the Church has particular motives also, which it imports you to be acquainted with. As she has devoted the Sunday to the memory of the resurrection of her spouse, Jesus Christ, so she has consecrated the Friday to the remembrance of his sufferings. Her spirit in this is the same, though her manner be different. For while the Sunday is a day of holy joy to her, because the resurrection of Christ is the principle of

our justification, and the basis of our hope; so she considers the Friday as a day of penance; because, on that day, the Son of God was crucified for our sins, which we should bewail and atone for, if we desire to participate in the merits of his passion. For this reason, in the primitive ages, the Fridays were kept as fasting-days; as were likewise the Saturdays, in honour of our Saviour's burial, and as preparatory to the Sunday. Afterwards, the fast of these two days was reduced to a simple abstinence; that is, a restriction from the use of meat; and which thence passed into a law, to which all are bound to submit. Even children are not exempted, when of an age to comply with it. Inability alone can dispense from its observance.

Listen not then, Theophilus, to such unprincipled people, as may attempt to persuade you that it concerns not God what nourishment we use. Doubtless, the distinction of our food is indifferent to the Deity. But it is not indifferent to him whether we admit or disclaim the authority of his Church: it is not indifferent to him whether we keep alive or extinguish the spirit of penance, which he exacts of his followers. Imitate not them, who, without a reasonable cause, or upon the most frivolous pretences, make free with this precept. The more common the disorder, the more ought we to lament it, as a grievous scandal; and to strive to ground ourselves more firmly in the sense of our duty, to avoid being borne down by the torrent of example. The great degeneracy, in this respect, that disgraces the times, cannot otherwise be considered than as an evident proof of the decrease of faith, and a fatal indifference in regard to salvation.

I am a sinner, O God! and for such thou dost assure me the sole remedy is penance. Were the mortifications, thou demandest, left to my own free option, I never should have courage to prescribe them to myself. But thy Church, in compassion, points out my duty to me. This is an additional motive, which stamps a fresh value on the performance of her injunctions, viz. the merit of obedience. Associated also with the efforts of the body of the faithful, these self-denials become more powerful to excite thy commiseration: so that I ought to think myself happy to find, in this union, wherewith to supply the defect of my own endeavours. I will obey this order punctually: nor shall the example of those, that infringe it, ever alter my purpose. I will observe it

myself, and impress it on those, who may hereafter depend on me. Such, O Lord! is my resolution, both in regard to this and to all the other mandates and ordinances of thy Church.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should grieve to see this precept so openly violated.

---

## CHAPTER LXII.

### ON SIN.

*Son, take heed thou never consent to sin; nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God. Tobias iv. 6.*

SIN is an offence against the law of God, whom we disobey and insult, whenever we commit what he prohibits to be done; or neglect to do that, which he enjoins us to perform.

First, then, sin is an impious attack upon the Sovereign Majesty of God, the Lord of the universe, to whom every thing is subject, but the insolent sinner. Secondly, it is a most foul ingratitude: for the God whom we offend, is he who gave us our being, which he still preserves; and who loads us with favours, at the very time we are disobeying him. Perhaps, my dear Theophilus, you have not yet comprehended the enormity of this evil: but these two reflections may help to give you an idea of it. And to perfect the impression, consider that it was for sin your Redeemer was crucified. Behold his cross: and see what he endured for the expiation of our crimes: this sight cannot fail to strike you with horror. Lastly, recall to your memory the dreadful punishment of sin: all the evils, that deluge the world, all the miseries of life, pain, sickness, and death, are the consequences of one only sin, viz. the sin of our parent, Adam. "By one man," says the Apostle, "sin entered into the world,—in whom all

have sinned.”\* This is called *original sin*, or the sin of our origin, because contracted from our birth; and it is the source of all other sins, that we commit by our own free will, which are denominated *actual sins*.

The guilt of actual sin may be incurred four different ways; by thought, by word, by deed, and by omission. The law of God forbids us not only to do what is wrong, but even to desire it. It restrains not only the hand and tongue, but the mind also and the heart: for it is from the heart disobedience originates. This is the root of sin; words and actions are but its produce.

Of actual sin there are two kinds, *mortal* and *venial*. A sin is *mortal* when the matter of it is grievous, and it is committed with a full and deliberate consent: and as such, it is the greatest of all possible evils. It bereaves us of sanctifying grace, which is the life of the soul; in like manner as the soul is the life of the body. It renders us the slaves of Satan, the enemies of God, and objects of the divine hatred. What evil then can be put in competition with this? O my child! How great should be your horror of it! How anxious your solicitude to shun its approaches. There is nothing in life you should not be willing to suffer, rather than knowingly to perpetrate a single mortal sin. Such were the sentiments of the truly affectionate and pious mother of St. Lewis. “Son,” she said to her child, “you know how much I love you: nevertheless, I declare that I had rather see you dead, than witness you committing one only mortal sin.” This early lesson the prince never forgot; but made so good use of it, that he ever after retained the most lively dread of sin, and lived and died a pattern of sanctity. I urge the like to you, Theophilus; fear sin more than death; avoid it as you would a pestilence. Shun even *venial* sins; that is to say, such sins, as being less atrocious in their nature, do not destroy the grace of God, but wound and impair it; and which, though they expose us not to the rigours of eternal damnation, make us obnoxious to the severity of temporal chastisements. The lowest degree of sin is a very great evil because it offends the Supreme Being. And besides, venial sin, when made light of, leads insensibly to mortal sin. “He,” says the Holy Ghost, “that condemneth small things, shall fall by little and little,”† and thus finally perish.

\* Rom. v. 12.

† Eccl. xix. 1.

Inspire me, O God, with that abhorrence of sin, which its malignity calls for. Teach me to dread and detest it more than all the miseries of life; to regard it as the supreme evil, the only evil to be apprehended. Alas! how shall I, a worm of the earth, dare to insult thy Sovereign Majesty? Shall I be so ungrateful, as wilfully to offend the most tender of parents? Can any misfortune be so great, as to lose thy favour and become an object of thy aversion? No, dear Lord! nothing shall have the power to separate me from thee: rather let me die than be so wretchedly miserable. Confirm me in this resolution, which I now make in thy presence. It is dictated by thyself: preserve it, then, I entreat; and let neither the violence of my passions, nor the influence of bad example be able to subvert it.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should look upon sin as the worst of all evils.

---

## CHAPTER LXIII.

### ON THE CAPITAL VICES: AND FIRST, ON PRIDE.

*Son, never suffer Pride to reign in thy mind or in thy Words: for from it all perdition took its beginning.*  
Tobias iv. 14.

ALL the sins that mankind commit, are reducible to seven capital heads, the vitiated sources of every species of iniquity. These seven fountains of corruption are *Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Envy, Gluttony, Anger, and Sloth*. It may be proper, Theophilus, to hold up to you the picture of each of these vices, and to delineate their effects; that you may be taught to conceive a just abhorrence of them, and learn to avoid them with the most sedulous care. Let us begin by the first, viz. Pride, which is at once the most foul and the most dangerous of them all.

"Suffer not Pride to reign in thy mind," was among the chief admonitions, Toby gave to his son. From this black

infection all our evils are derived. Pride, then, is an inordinate conceit and opinion of ourselves; whereby we are led to prefer ourselves before others, and ascribe every thing to our own merits and nothing to God. Hence *Vanity* and an immoderate desire of praise. Admiration is the proud man's idol. In all his words and actions applause is what he aims at. He is charmed with the grossest flattery, and grasps at it with eagerness. If refused him, he is dissatisfied, and thinks himself ill-used. Hence *Hypocrisy*. He conceals his real vices, and affects pretended virtues. His whole attention is bent on attracting the public eye, and showing himself off. Hence *Contempt of his neighbour*. The high opinion he has of himself and of his own inherent merit, makes him look down upon others from his ideal elevation: and he treats them, of course, with slight and with scorn. Hence, in fine, *Disobedience*. He refuses to submit to the commands of superiors, and spurns at their advice. Every show of authority offends his lofty spirit, which indignantly bears the thought of subjection and control.

How odious a vice! Shun it therefore most studiously. When assailed by its insinuations, beg of God to remove from you *the arrogance of haughty eyes*. Recollect the words of the Apostle: "What hast thou, that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory in it, as if thou hadst not received it?"\* Remember that Pride is offensive both to God and to man; and that the Deity takes a pleasure in confounding the proud; whilst he pours on the humble the profusions of his grace.

*Humility*, is the virtue that is opposite to Pride, and the ground-work of all other virtues. The humble man is conscious of his lowliness and misery. He despises himself, and willingly submits to be despised by others. In fact, if we reflect on what we are, how many subjects of humiliation do we not find within ourselves. Not to mention the infirmities of the body; of a body formed of the dust of the earth, and destined quickly to return to it, let us view the state of our souls. And what do we see therein? Ignorance in the understanding; corruption in the heart; a marked propensity to evil; a strange inconstancy in good. Nothingness and sin alone can be called our own. If we possess any thing estimable, it is the gift of the Almighty: the advantages

\* 1 Cor. iv. 9.

of mind and body, the blessings of nature and grace, all equally flow from that fountain of perfection.

A person convinced of all this, is little disposed to be proud, to court praise, or to seek for honours. Averse to ostentation, he regards rather with an eye of pity the wretched trappings of worldly grandeur. Acquainted with his own defects, he is so far from condemning others, that he thinks them better than himself. If he perceives himself possessed of any laudable qualities, he attributes the whole honour of them to the bounty of God. But his attention is more employed on the consideration of his faults; and for these he humbles himself profoundly in the presence of the Deity. These sentiments of humility are highly pleasing to the Almighty; who beholds with satisfaction the dispositions of the humbled soul. The lower she stoops, the higher does he raise her; and the more sensible she is of her unworthiness and dependence, the more does he exalt and enrich her with his graces. Happy then they that are truly humble of heart: for they are the favourites of heaven. But woe to the proud; for God will bring them to confusion.'

I know, my God! that Pride is the deepest wound of my soul. I was conceived in sin. Nothingness is my extraction, and misery my inheritance. This body, which I am so vain of, shall ere long become rottenness and the food of vile insects. And yet, O inconsiderateness! I am bloated with self-conceit. I think myself something, and expect to be commended. To thee alone, O Lord! belong honour and praise. Shame and confusion only are my portion. Whatever I have or am, I hold it of thy liberality. I exist even but by thy favour. To thee alone is due the glory of every thing good, that belongs to me. Unhappy me, should I presume to rob thee of it. The advantages, thou hast blessed me with, so far from elating me, are so many subjects of humiliation, from the bad use I make of them. How many others in the world would have employed them more profitably? Abandon me not, I pray thee, to the spirit of Pride. Give me the virtue of humility; that humility so precious, so estimable in thy sight; and which ever finds acceptance at the throne of thy mercy.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should frequently petition for the virtue of humility.



## CHAPTER LXIV.

## ON COVETOUSNESS.

*Beware of all covetousness. Luke xii. 15. Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man. Eccl. x. 9.*

COVETOUSNESS is an inordinate attachment and adherence to riches.

To be possessed of riches is certainly no crime: but it is a great one to set our affections on them, to pursue them with eagerness, to place our happiness in their acquisition, and to employ unlawful means in procuring and collecting them. "The desire of money," says St. Paul, "is the root of all evils."\* He also styles it *idolatry*: inasmuch as it leads a man to make money the sole object of his worship. An anxious solicitude for wealth produces *an indifference for salvation*. The mind, bent on heaping on earthly treasures, is insensible to those of heaven: and there is reason to apprehend that he ceases to be a Christian, who is over intent on becoming rich. Hence, the same Apostle informs us that many in his days lost their faith, in consequence of giving way to this insatiable passion. It produces a *forgetfulness of God*: for the thought will be engrossed with what the heart affects. It produces a *hardness towards the poor*, which no sufferings of the distressed can mitigate or soften. It produces what is almost incredible, a *cruelty to oneself*: for the miser becomes callous to his own wants: he prefers money to health and even to his very life; and refuses himself necessities, for fear of diminishing his stores. He accumulates riches, without making any use of them. He is indigent in the midst of plenty; and in want of every thing amidst profusion. Finally, this vice produces *duplicity*: for, to come at the wealth of others, which it passionately covets, avarice will employ lies, dishonesty, and fraud. "There is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale."† When this passion takes the lead, honour and conscience disappear; knavery and violence fill their place. All sorts of means, even the

\* 1 Tim. vi. 10.

† Eccl. x. 19.

most criminal, are used to augment those treasures, on which the heart is fixed. And what is still more deplorable, this miserable passion gains strength and vigour, in proportion with years.

Time and reflection abate and imperceptibly allay the noxious ferment of other evil dispositions. But avarice grows upon a man, and receives additional force from the circumstance of age. The nearer the miser approaches to that fatal moment, when all must be relinquished, the more he becomes attached to his pitiful idol. The more closely death presses on him, the sonder he is of his money, and the more necessary he considers it to preserve him from the pressure of chimerical distresses. "Thou fool," Christ says to him, "this night do they require thy soul of thee: and whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"\* which thou hast amassed with such anxiety? They shall pass into other hands: while a coffin and a shroud shall be thy sole remaining portion of them.

Be then upon your guard, Theophilus, against so unreasonable, so perverse, so fatal a passion. Taught by the mouth of Christ, seek not to lay up riches on earth, where rust consumes, and the worms devour them, and where they are continually exposed to the depredations of rapine. But strive to prepare treasures in heaven, where they will be fully secure both from the ravages of time and the machinations of villany. Labour to acquire the virtue, that is opposed to avarice, and which consists in a sincere disengagement from the things of the world, and a Christian indifference to either poverty or opulence. If you are poor, envy not the rich; nor wish to be rich yourself. Such perishable things only serve to inflame, but will never satisfy your cravings. The virtuous man is happier with his slender mediocrity, than the wicked with all the glitter of his overflowing coffers. Riches, unfairly acquired, will be of little service. But honesty and justice will deliver from death. "Fear not, my son," said Tobias; "we lead indeed a poor life, but we have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good."† Having raiment and food, we ought to make ourselves contented. If you are rich, be not attached to your wealth. Reflect that you can carry no part of it away with you; and that the whole may become a prey to a

\* Luke xii. 20.

† Job iv. 23.

rapacious heir, who, perhaps, waits impatiently for your death, to get possession of your leavings. Employ it in alleviating the distresses of the poor; and, by this holy use of it, you will store up riches in heaven, that never shall perish.

What a madness, O God! to set our affections on riches transitory and perishable; and to place our happiness in heaping them up, without the heart to enjoy them! Great indeed must be our blindness, not to see how unreasonable, how base this passion is. Alas, O Lord! I may be enslaved to this vice myself, since others have been seduced by it, unless thou vouchsafest to support me by thy grace. Grant me then this aid, I pray thee. If, in thy bounty, thou art pleased to bestow riches on me, permit me not to love, nor yet to abuse them, by rendering them subservient to the calls of sensuality, or to the gratifications of idleness. Thou wouldest have them made serviceable to my salvation, by becoming in my hands the resource of the needy. Make my practice accord with the views of thy providence, by relieving their wants. And, to wean my affections from all attachment to wealth, remind me often of futurity. Recall to my remembrance the assertions of thy word: that infallible word, by which thou hast pronounced such woes against the rich, that neglect to use properly what thy liberality has given them, and hast promised so great rewards to those, who, in compliance with thy order, shall employ thy bounteous presents in succouring the indigent.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should frequently give alms, though ever so small, to keep ourselves in the habit of a Christian beneficence.

## CHAPTER LXV.

## ON LUST.

*God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification.* 1 Thessal. iv. 7.

Lust is a criminal attachment to sensual pleasure.

Nothing more unworthy of a human creature than this infamous vice: nothing more contrary to the vocation of a Christian. *Let no sort of impurity be so much as named among you*, says the Apostle. And indeed, to conceive the abhorrence, in which it deserves to be held, we need but cast an eye on its dismal effects. It causes a *hatred of God, an aversion to the duties of religion, and a horror of death*. But, to a fuller conviction, let us enter into a more minute detail of the horrible consequences of this ruinous passion.

A person, addicted to this vice, is sensible that God holds him in dislike and detestation. He regards him as a severe revenger of the crimes and excesses, into which his passion hurries him; and consequently *abhors him*, who will hereafter chastise and punish them with rigour. *The duties of religion*, which breathe a spirit of purity, can never be allied to this bestial vice. When once a man becomes a slave to it, he no longer has any relish for the exercises of piety. Prayer is irksome, and quickly laid aside: the word of God, that denounces perdition on such, as give themselves up to it, is no farther attended to: the sacraments, to approach which this vile propensity must be abjured, are slighted and forsaken. The cries of conscience thus stifled, a hardness of heart ensues; that is to say, a state of stupor and insensibility, in which a person becomes callous to remorse, and lost to every consideration, whether of duty, character, or health. He forgets his best interests, and turns a deaf ear to the voice of admonition. Nothing does he think of but how to gratify his passion, let the cost be what it may. The only concern, he feels, is lest any thing should disturb him in the enjoyment of his pleasures. Hence *a horror of death*, which to the libertine is most dreadful; because it must separate him from all he loves, and summon him to the bar of an in-

jured and avenging Deity. Detest then a vice so fatal, and endeavour by the grace of God to acquire the opposite virtue: I mean the virtue of chastity, which, while it renders us like the angels, is so pleasing to God, that, even in this life, he rewards it with the tokens of his favour. And as for the life to come, he promises everlasting bliss to them, that shall have preserved unsullied the lustre of their purity. *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.*

And to protect a virtue, which is exposed to so many dangers, Jesus Christ recommends two principal means, namely, watchfulness and prayer. *Watch ye, he says, and pray, that you enter not into temptation.* To watch, is to take precautions against whatever may injure the beautiful delicacy of this tender flower. We must therefore keep a guard upon our eyes, not to suffer them to dwell upon any dangerous object. We must keep a guard upon our ears, never to listen to lewd discourse. We must keep a guard upon our mind, to reject all bad thoughts, and every thing prejudicial to this lovely virtue. We must keep a guard upon our heart, to suppress the first risings of licentious desire. Particularly, Theophilus, be observant of the point last mentioned.—“As soon as an indecent image presents itself to your imagination, reject it with firmness,” says St. Bernard, “and it will quickly disappear. But if you allow it time to fix, it will awaken a complacency, that will prove injurious to your innocence. For this complacency will lead you to consent; consent to action; action to habit; habit to necessity, and necessity to death.” Whereas, by a speedy resistance to the first impressions, this series of calamities will be easily avoided.

Secondly, you must have recourse to prayer, as soon as you perceive the first emotions of this passion. On such occasions, cast yourself into the arms of God, saying to him with the Apostles, *Lord, save me, or I perish.* Do not even wait, till you be tempted, to shelter yourself under his wings. Entreat him frequently and fervently either to deliver you from such trials, or to enable you, by his grace, to resist and overcome them. If you are faithful in so doing, be assured you will come off victor, and that you will even reap advantage from the temptation, to strengthen you in virtue.

I am firmly resolved, dear Lord! to employ the two means, which thou thyself art pleased to dictate, of maintaining my purity. I will place a watch over all my senses, that the

devil may find no entrance, through those avenues, into my heart. I will turn away my mind from all evil suggestions, as soon as I perceive them. Pierce me, O God! with thy fear; and frustrate the attempts of my powerful enemy. Under all my temptations, I will address myself to thee with a filial confidence. I will cry out to thee fervently, and from the bottom of my heart: *Have compassion on me, O Lord! O Father of mercies! have compassion on me:* and suffer nothing to tarnish the lustre of my chastity. Thou, O God! art the God of purity. Give me a fixed attachment to this amiable virtue, which assimilates us, while on earth, to the purity of the Angels. Whatever struggles it may cost me, once more I determine to preserve it inviolate, and to shun with solicitude every occasion, that may endanger it. Why should I not be able, assisted by thy grace, to do what so many others have done, who have glorified thee in the body, by subduing their passions? Immaculate Virgin! who art the special protectrix of youth, obtain for me the strength to adhere to my present purpose, which cannot fail to give thee pleasure: and entreat thy beloved son, that I may steadfastly persevere in it to the end of my life.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must watch and pray both to avoid and to resist the temptations of lust.

---

## CHAPTER LXVI

### ON ENVY.

*By the envy of the devil, death came into the world: and they that follow him, are of his side.* Wisdom ii. 24, 25.

Envy is an uneasiness of mind, and a repining vexation at another's desert, because it seems to lessen our own.

The envious man is galled at the merits of his neighbour. He cannot bear to be surpassed, or even equalled by any. He is hurt to find accomplishments or virtues in others, which he either has not himself, or wishes to possess exclu-

sively. Did the sight of the advantages, that he observes in his neighbour, inspire only the desire of imitating and copying them, it would not then be envy: it would be that incentive to virtue, a generous emulation. But such are not the dispositions of the man infected with envy. He has less inclination to see himself possessed of those estimable qualities, than to behold them torn off from the brow of his rivals. He considers the good, that befalls them, as a misfortune to himself; their success as his loss; their reputation as his censure. This unhappy passion, like a gnawing worm, consumes his vitals; like a corrosive poison, exhausts his spirits, and renders him the butcher of his own peace and happiness. How base a vice! How pernicious its effects!

The first of these effects is a *satisfaction*, the envious man feels *at the misfortune of his brethren*. Do those, whom he envies, become objects of reprehension? He exults with joy, and triumphs at their fall. He finds a malignant pleasure in seeing them humbled. While, at the same time, remark, Theophilus, that they, whom he thus rejoices over, have done him no sort of harm. A person, actuated by revenge, attacks only his enemies, and them, from whom he has, or at least thinks he has, received some personal injury. But the envious man hates those, whose virtues alone excite his spleen, and whose only crime is to be too deserving and commendable. What a monster! Is the human heart susceptible of such perverseness and malignity?

The second effect of envy is *detraction and calumny*. It exerts every nerve to stain the character of those, whose merit gives it uneasiness. As much as in it lies, it diminishes the good, that is said of them: it puts a malicious construction upon their actions, and represents as vices the most perfect of their virtues. Their piety in its eyes is nothing but hypocrisy; their success the effect of chance, and not the result of good conduct.

A third effect of this vice is a *wishful propensity to injure its neighbour*. From words it proceeds to actions. It crosses his designs, and employs every kind of means to give him trouble and perplexity. It is constantly upon the move to prevent him from obtaining the end of his pursuits: or if, in spite of its efforts, he is so lucky as to acquire it, to deprive him of their advantages. Even the most horrid atrocities and the foulest acts of violence are sometimes the offspring of this execrable vice.

Envy was the cause of Cain's murdering his brother. He perceived that Abel's sacrifices were more acceptable to the Deity, than those offered by himself, because presented with a better heart and a more upright intention. Thereupon, he conceived a jealousy, which was not to be appeased but by the blood of his competitor. Envy inspired the brethren of the guiltless Joseph, with the unnatural desire of either cruelly making away with him, or of selling him for a slave. Envy induced the Pharisees and leaders of the Jews to calumniate, to persecute, and even to crucify the Son of God. The very judge, who pronounced sentence on him, was convinced it was through envy they delivered him into his hands. Thus the most enormous of all crimes was the effect of baleful envy.

Be not then surprised, my child, that the Apostle, St. Paul, enumerates this vice, among those, which he styles the works of the flesh; those deeds of darkness, that conduct to perdition. Keep your heart close shut against its detestable malignity. Do your utmost to practise the contrary virtue; that is to say, a Christian benevolence, which makes us sympathize in the happiness, as in the misery of others, for God's sake, and with a view to their salvation. The benevolence, I speak of, is no other than charity. Whoever is actuated and guided by this virtue, takes a part in all the events that happen to his neighbour. He rejoices with those, that are glad; he condoles with the sorrowful; he participates with all in the good or evil, they experience; and this with as much sincerity, as if himself were involved in the issue of their concerns.

Preserve me, O Lord! from envy, a vice as odious in thy sight, as destructive to them that are guilty of it. I detest and abhor it. I will use my best endeavours to suppress it from the beginning; and assume a disposition more conformable to reason, and to the dictates of religion. I will partake, in unison with my brethren, of their good or ill fortune, and will share with them alike in their joy and affliction. So far from being grieved at the good qualities they possess, I will admit no other sentiment than that of a laudable emulation, and will endeavour to copy whatever good I see in them. The sight of their abilities shall stimulate me to improve the talents, with which thou hast graciously favoured me. The virtues, I behold them practise, shall animate me to esteem and to practise them myself. If they profit more than I do,



I will harbour no uneasiness; since application alone is what thou requirest of me. I will even make it a matter of joy; inasmuch as by thus taking part in the success of their exertions, I shall draw thy blessing on my own, and shall merit the assistance of thy favour and protection.

*The Practical Inference.*

That instead of envying, or grieving at, we should imitate such, as are distinguished for their good qualities.

---

CHAPTER LXVII.

ON GLUTTONY.

*Be not hasty in a feast. Sober drinking is health to soul and body. Eccl. xxxi. 17, 37.*

GLUTTONY is an intemperate use of meat and drink.

It is not forbidden to feel a pleasure in eating and drinking. The wise providence of God has seasoned with a certain relish the use of that food, which is necessary for the maintenance of our health and vigour. But to seek nothing but satisfaction in it is an abuse of this blessing. We must eat and drink, solely with a view to preserve life, and by no means to flatter the desires of sensuality. The end, we should therein propose, is to satisfy nature and to recruit our strength; that we may be better enabled to perform our duties and to serve Almighty God. Such is the direction of the Apostle: "Whether you eat, or whether you drink, do all for the glory of God."

To follow this advice, we must not study at our meals to gratify the palate; but to correspond with the views of Providence, which, by the use of food and aliment, intends only the support and preservation of our existence. To have no other aim therein, but that of a sensual satisfaction, is gluttony; it is making a *God of the belly*, according to the expression of St. Paul. It is a vice unworthy of the dignity and character of a man; a vice, that stupifies the soul, dulls

the understanding, impairs the health and shortens our days. "Gluttony," says an ancient writer, "is more fatal to mankind than the murderous steel."

Gluttony produces *intemperance*: because it leads us to eat and drink beyond the bounds of sobriety, and sometimes even of reason. People of common decency of manners, therefore, are seldom guilty of it. Education and sentiment are sufficient to make us shun it, as infamous and brutal. It is also the parent of *sensuality*, which consists in being dainty and nice in the choice of dishes; or in being bent on the use of such, as are prejudicial to health, merely because they please and flatter the taste; or, in fine, in greedily devouring our accustomed food. What an inversion of the law of nature, to make that the occasion of the ruin of our health, which was meant to support it! How disgraceful to a reasonable being, to become the slave of sensuality, which even the brute beast recoils at! This vice also produces *a contempt of the orders and regulations of the Church*. A person, who abandons himself to gluttony, makes little account of the fasts and the days of abstinence, she enjoins. He knows not the meaning of mortification and self-denial. The law, which prescribes certain stated privations, appears to him a vexatious, and intolerable yoke. He seeks every pretence to be exempted from it; and persuades himself to violate not only the precept of fasting, but to use, without scruple, prohibited food.

Finally, Gluttony produces *dissension*, with all its append-ing horrors. From the bosom of intemperance spring disputes, broils, quarrels and the extravagancies of frantic passion. Hear how the Spirit of God delivers himself on this subject, by the pen of the enlightened Solomon: "Who hath wo? Who hath contentions? Who falleth into pits? Who hath wounds without cause? Surely they, that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups."

Never, then, Theophilus, *be greedy at your meals*, nor give into the excesses of rioting and drunkenness. Conceive a lively horror of a vice so scandalous, so unbecoming a man and much more a Christian. At all your meals, observe a uniform sobriety; that virtue, which regulates our eating and drinking, according to the rules of necessity; that virtue, which invigorates the body, and adds length to the years of life. Take care not to exceed the limits of the wants and calls of nature. A Christian considers eating as

a necessary medicine. He listens neither to greediness nor sensuality. He avoids the appearance of daintiness, and seeks not such dishes, as may flatter his senses. In a word, he strives to imitate the conduct and the example of Christ, who was pleased to submit to this humiliating act, to serve us as a model. He has always before his eyes that admonition of his Saviour: *Take heed that your hearts be not overcharged with surfeiting*. And in order to remind himself of the rules of moderation, as well as to merit help to abide by their dictates, he is careful to say grace, both before and after meals. Never omit this practice: for it is not only respectable, and to be commended in itself, but an effectual method also to attract the divine blessing. God knows the temptations, that attend even the satisfying the demands of our nature; and he will be ready to protect us under them, if we apply to him by prayer.

O God! to thy paternal bounty are we indebted for the many good things, we have, for the supply of our necessities. These thou art pleased to bestow, only for the preservation of life and the renewal of our strength. If thou dost annex pleasure to the use of our food, it is an effect of thy kindness: it is that we may feel no repugnance to what necessity demands. But to use it solely for satisfaction, or wilfully to pass the bounds of this urgent necessity, is to turn thy favours against thyself; it is to employ in offending thee what should be a powerful incentive to stimulate our gratitude. Never, O Lord! suffer me to be guilty of such perversity. Teach me to use, as becomes a Christian, the gifts of thy providence; never to run into any excess; never to seek to please the palate; but only to satisfy my wants. That I may deserve this grace at thy hands, I will sanctify my meals by prayer; and although this pious custom be, now-a-days, too much neglected, I will punctually observe it. I will never blush at being a Christian, nor be deterred by bad example.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should make it our constant rule to say grace both before and after meals.

## CHAPTER LXVIII

## ON ANGER.

*Be not quickly angry; for Anger resteth in the bosom of a fool.* Eccles. vii. 10.

THERE is a holy anger, the effect of zeal, which makes us reprimand with severity, in cases of duty and conscience, when mildness proves ineffectual. Of this nature is the anger of a parent or superior, at the sight of disorders, which he is obliged to put a stop to. With this sort of anger our Redeemer himself was influenced, when he drove from the temple, those that profaned its awful sanctity.

But the anger, which is criminal, is of a very different description. It is an impetuous emotion, which urges us to repel with violence whatever is displeasing. It is vicious in its principle. For it is the effect of some passion, that sways the heart, and which meets with opposition. The proud man swells with indignation at whatever hurts his vanity: the miser is irritated, when his golden projects are crossed: the voluptuary becomes incensed, if his pleasures are controlled. This kind of anger is neither according to God, nor subordinate to reason. It disquiets the soul; and the agitation it occasions, discovers itself in the countenance and in all the gestures of the body: the eyes flash with fire: the voice falters; the whole frame is convulsed. A person in this state, while he forgets himself, loses sight of all regard and consideration for others. Hence the *invectives*, he pours on them, that are the objects of his wrath; the venom flows in copious streams from his pale and quivering lips: neither the foulest censures, nor the grossest calumnies are spared; nor is any stone left unturned to vilify and debase them. Hence *imprecations against himself*, and sometimes the most shocking and horrible *blasphemies*, the rash effusions of his irritated phrenzy. Nothing is then inviolable, nothing sacred to his impious tongue. The most flagrant acts of *outrage* next ensue; when no cruelty is too great for his vengeance, no brutality for his rage. O God! can a person in this condition deserve to be called a Christian? No:

the name of man even is too good for him, whom fierce anger thus transforms into a savage and ferocious beast.

Such are the dire effects, Theophilus, of this terrible passion. Accustom yourself by times to master and subdue it. As soon as you perceive the first impressions of it rising, stifle them in silence: speak not while the heat continues; for all you then might say, would only tend to increase the flame. Exercise the *patience and meekness* of a Christian. These virtues will teach you to bear, for God's sake, the contradictions and trials, that you may occasionally meet with. They will check the impetuous sallies of anger, and prevent you from showing any symptoms of disquietude, or letting a word of complaint escape your troubled lips. They will give you a modest carriage towards all; and a circumspection, tempered with mildness, towards those in particular, whose harshness or impetuosity may require to be managed.

These are the virtues, that St. Paul recommends in the following words: "I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called. With all humility and mildness, with patience; supporting one another in charity."\* And to engage us to the practice of these amiable virtues, he recalls to our memory the cross of Jesus Christ. He sets him before our eyes, who suffered so much from the malice of sinners. He represents the patience he bore tenderly with us, when yet his enemies by sin; and how dearly he loved us, while deserving only of his hatred. Encourage yourself, therefore, by the example of Christ, to put up with every thing; and strive to come as near to this heavenly model, as human weakness will permit. You have no other means to secure your salvation, than by rendering yourself conformable to his sacred original. Attend then to what he says to you: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart:"† while he pressingly exhorts you to an imitation of his virtues: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also."‡

How often, O God! do I abandon myself to impatience and choler. The slightest contradiction or affront provokes me. By so frequently giving way to anger, I expose myself to contract a habit of this dangerous passion. I feel the necessity of curbing my temper, and of forming myself betimes to patience and meekness. I have my defects, no less than

\* Ephes. iv. 1.

† Math. xi. 29.

‡ John xiii. 15.

other people ; and as I wish them to bear with mine, it is but just I should bear with theirs. Can I have so much repugnance to comply with a mandate, which thou hast so strongly inculcated both by thy word and example ? Can I be so hurt by a trifling injury, when I behold thee suffering the blackest calumnies, the most outrageous insults, with an invincible patience, and enduring the tortures of the cross, without complaint or resentment. Jesus, who art the God of peace ! Jesus, who art meek and humble of heart, and who commandest me to copy thy endearing sweetness ! assist me in restraining my natural impetuosity. Never suffer me to wish to return evil for evil : but enable me, after thy example, to observe a profound silence under the most galling affronts. Thou pronouncest the meek happy, and callest them the children of God, that love and keep peace. Give me then, O Lord, this pacific disposition, which thou requirest as a badge and the livery of thy servants.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must strive to live in peace with all, by overlooking their defects.

---

## CHAPTER LXIX.

### ON SLOTH.

*An idle soul shall suffer hunger..* Prov. xix. 15. *Idleness hath taught much evil.* Eccl. xxxiii. 29.

SLOTH is a sluggish disposition : a voluntary dislike and aversion to labour ; which occasions us to neglect even the most essential obligations, rather than force or exert ourselves in taking pains to discharge them.

There is no kind of sin, no sort of disorder, to which sloth does not lead : because it reduces the soul to a state of stupidity and heaviness, that indisposes it to resist its bad incli-

nations. It is commonly styled the mother of all vices: but those, that immediately spring from it, are

First, *Idleness and loss of time*. The sluggard spends his days, his months and his years either on the lap of drowsy inactivity, or in the vapid pursuit of frivolous amusements. His performance of religious duties is defective and criminal. Prayer is either entirely neglected, or tepidly slurred over: the sacraments are abandoned, or irreverently received, for want of preparation. Nor does he acquit himself better of the obligations of his state of life. A youth, for instance, reaps no advantage from the benefit of his studies. He performs nothing that is prescribed him; or he performs it imperfectly, without application or attention. Hence his understanding remains uncultivated, his memory unpractised; and he quits the theatre of his education almost as crude, as he entered it. And what is the result of this loss of his youthful hours? He is afterwards employed in some line of business; a business, that demands a certain degree of information: but he is unequal to the task, and, of course, executes it ill; his ignorance is visible, his incapacity manifest; till at length, he becomes an object of public derision. How much does he then regret his past idleness and perversity! But in vain: his regret comes too late; the loss is irreparable.

The second vice, that sloth gives birth to, is a timid *pusillanimity*. The idle man has not the courage nor the resolution to undertake the minutest concern: the smallest obstacle disheartens him: he thinks every thing impossible, because he will not bestir himself. "Wo," says the sacred text, "to them that are faint hearted."\* It also produces *inconstancy*. If ever he conceives any desires of amendment, these desires are but faint, and of very short duration. He quickly grows tired, and wraps himself up again in his accustomed indolence. "The sluggard," says the wise man, "willeth, and willeth not."† Hence that *lukewarmness*, which accompanies him in all his undertakings; that is to say, a listlessness of mind and languor of spirits, that leave him no relish nor inclination for any thing. Hence, in fine, *insensibility*, which makes him deaf to the remonstrances and exhortations of those that would rouse him from his stupor. Nothing can

\* Eccl. ii. 15.

† Prov. xiii. 4.

move, nothing can affect him. The sting of reproach, and the spur of good example are alike lost upon him.

What a sink of iniquity is the soul of the slothful! the Holy Ghost compares it to a neglected piece of ground, "I passed," says the sacred penman, "by the field of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man, and behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall was broken down."\* Shun then, my dear Theophilus, shun a vice so noxious. Hear the words which God addresses to you, by the oracle of the book of Proverbs: "Go to the ant, O sluggard! and consider her ways, and learn wisdom." For, though she hath no guide, nor instructor, "she provideth her meat for herself in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep! O sluggard! When wilt thou rise out of thy sleep? Want shall come upon thee, as a traveller, and poverty, as a man armed."† Remember well this lesson, and never, I pray, lose sight of it. Entreat God to grant you the virtue opposite to sloth; that is to say, a zealous activity, which will make you take pleasure in your duties, and be ever ready to discharge them, with a view to serve him and to effect your salvation. Be not dejected at difficulties. Have but courage; and the Almighty, by his unction, will render easy and pleasant what at first seemed hard and painful. For as from him is derived the obligation of working, so from him must come the aid to fulfil his command. And for the rest, be assured that the irksomeness attending inactivity and sloth is a thousand times more intolerable than the most laborious employment.

O God! thou hast commanded man to labour, and he deviates from the order, which thou hast established on earth, when he yields to sloth, and spends his time either in sluggish inaction or in idle diversions. This time thou allowest him, that he may employ it in something serviceable; and thou wilt demand of him an account of the use, he shall have made of it. "The unprofitable servant *shall be* cast into outward darkness, *where* there shall be *eternal* weeping and gnashing of teeth." Permit me not, dear Lord! to be involved in this frightful sentence. Grant me the grace of properly employing the first years of my life. I offer to thee, from this moment, all my occupations and studies, to

\* Prov. xxiv. 30, 31.

† Prov. vi. 6—11.



which I will apply myself diligently, in order to please thee. Preserve me from idleness, from disgust and from levity. Whenever I perceive my mind to be wandering from the object, that ought to engage it, I will instantly recall it, and renew my attention. Prosper, O God! my endeavours, and facilitate this application, by inspiring me with a relish for the duties enjoined me. For it is thou, that impartest wisdom and understanding to the young.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should at all times be solicitous to keep ourselves employed.

END OF THE SECOND PART.

## PART III.

### THE RESOURCES OF RELIGION.

---

#### CHAPTER LXX.

##### ON THE NECESSITY OF GRACE, AND THE MEANS OF OBTAINING IT.

*Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above; coming down from the Father of lights.* James. i. 17.

THE grace of God is the support of our virtue, and the source of all our good. It is of the utmost necessity, in order to keep the divine commandments, and to fulfil the will of Heaven. This our Redeemer himself tells us: "Without me you can do nothing:" and after him St. Paul: "Not that we are sufficient to think any thing of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God."\* Grace, therefore, is a supernatural help, which the Almighty gives us, out of his gratuitous mercy, and in consideration of the merits of his Son Jesus Christ.

Of grace there are two kinds: first, *habitual* or *sanctifying* grace, which cleanses and justifies us: that is to say, by the means of which we pass from a state of sin to a state of righteousness; and by which we are made the children of God, acceptable in his sight, and heirs to his kingdom. Secondly, *actual* grace, which consists in the inspiration of a good thought, that enlightens the understanding; and in the

\* 2 Cor. iii. 15.

influence of a pious motion, that decides and helps the will to do what is right.

Original sin cast a gloom of obscurity over the understanding of man, and spread corruption in his heart. In consequence of this, we are all born in ignorance, and with a strong disposition and propensity to evil. From these two sources flow all our crimes. We sin, either because we are ignorant of our duty; or because, although we are acquainted with it, we prefer following our inclinations to the light, that is within us. And for ever should we continue enslaved to sin, and incapable of performing any thing meritorious or good, did not God open the eyes of our clouded understanding, and give the heart a bent to the exercise of virtue. Grace heals these two wounds, the effects of sin upon the soul. It discovers to us what we should do: it inspires the desire, and enables us to execute it. What would become of man, attacked on every side, both interiorly and exteriorly, did not God sustain his weakness? For to his natural tendency to evil, we must add the temptations he experiences from the devil and from creatures. What dangers from every quarter! The world displays its charms and attractions to allure him. The devil is unremitting, in presenting to his senses the most flattering objects; and in working, by every artifice, on his too susceptible imagination. No, never could he resist such a combination of foes, did the Almighty cease for a moment to protect and support him. For this reason, the Apostle, after lamenting the contradictions, that he finds within himself, thus exclaims: "Unhappy man, that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."\* For the same reason, in reciting the Lord's prayer, we daily beg of God, that *his name be hallowed; that his will be done on earth, as it is in heaven; that he would not lead us into temptation; but would deliver us from evil.* Wherefore, according to the doctrine of our Saviour, we can neither glorify the name of God, nor accomplish his will, nor resist temptation, nor escape the snares of surrounding enemies, but by the aid of God himself: whilst, on the other hand, by the help of his grace, we become supereminently powerful. "I can do all things," St. Paul says, "in him who strengtheneth me."†

\* Rom. vii. 24, 25.

† Phil. iv. 13.

But this assistance, Theophilus, is by no means due to us: if it were, it would no longer be grace. We have no sort of claim to it. It is a gift of the Deity, out of his infinite mercy, and in virtue of the merits of his Son, Christ Jesus. He refuses it to no one; and it is entirely our own fault, if it does not operate our salvation. It is not that grace is wanting to us; but we to grace. This all-powerful support God has annexed to the *sacraments*, when properly received. He has promised it to *prayer*, when duly performed. We have therefore two infallible means of obtaining this treasure; which means I here denominate *the resources of religion*.

First, then, *sanctifying* grace is conveyed to our souls, through the channels of the sacraments of baptism and penance, instituted by our Lord, for this very intent; and which, in consequence of this institution, are become the necessary vehicles of our righteousness and justice. Secondly, the Deity has promised to hear us, whenever we make application to him by prayer; when we implore his assistance; when we solicit his mercy, in the name of his Son, who has loved us to that degree, as to sacrifice his life for us. It is in your power, then, my child to draw down the grace of God, and by the efficacy of its help to fulfil his commandments. For the Almighty commands not impossibilities. He orders us to do what we can; and to ask of him what we cannot do, and he assists us to accomplish it. His commands are not oppressive: for his "yoke is sweet, and his burden is light." The children of God, love his Son, Jesus Christ; and they, that love him, are observant of his word, which they certainly may keep, if aided by grace. And thus, living *temperately, justly, and godly*, they may, through their Redeemer, profit by that grace, into which they are introduced by the merits of his passion. For God never forsakes those, whom he once has justified, unless they first forsake him. He ceases not to protect them, while they continue faithful in their obedience.

Yes, O Lord! it would be impossible to lead the life of a Christian, and to save my soul, without the indispensable help of thy sovereign grace. The fund of depravity that is within me, and the multiplied attacks of my external enemies unite to convince me of the certainty of this truth. But this support thou dost offer me; and it depends solely on myself to have and to improve it. If I am weak, it is my own fault: it is because I have neglected to sue for thy grace; because I have omitted to take advantage of it, and be-

cause, to my sorrow, I have even rejected it. When I was so unhappy as to forfeit my spiritual life by sin, might I not have recovered my loss, by having recourse to that sacrament, which thou hast instituted for this purpose? When assailed by temptations, may I not lift up my hands to thee and implore thy assistance? Thou hast promised to help them, that shall invoke thee by prayer. Why have I not used the arms, thou hast so liberally supplied me with; and which, with confidence in thee, would have rendered me victorious? Forget my past resistance to the calls of thy mercy. Make my mind more attentive to thy future inspirations, and my heart more pliant to thy salutary impressions. Grant that, by my fidelity in corresponding with thy grace, I may courageously embrace the cause of virtue, and resolutely adhere to it till the hour of my death.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should attend to the pious thoughts, which God is pleased to suggest to us.

---

## CHAPTER LXXI.

### ON THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL:

*You shall draw waters with joy, out of the Saviour's fountains. Isaias: xii. 3.*

CHRIST has instituted the sacraments, as the ordinary channels, through which he communicates that grace, which conducts to eternal bliss. He has established certain outward and visible signs, to which he has affixed the supereminent gifts of justification and merit. By virtue of the divine power, annexed to their operation, these signs are not only significant of what they impart; but they are also effective; producing, nourishing, and augmenting our spiritual life. They are called *Sacraments*, or *Sacred signs*. They are *signs*, because they denote what we do not see; and they are *sacred signs*, because they hold out to us the knowledge

of a celestial grace, which they communicate to us. In the sacraments, then, two things are to be attended to: the one that we see, and therefore believe; the other that we believe, though we see it not. What we see are the external gestures or actions of the minister: for example, in baptism, we see the water poured upon the infant's head, and we hear the awful words that are pronounced at the same moment. What we do not see is the internal operation, by which God invisibly cleanses the soul, and purifies it from sin. In thus annexing his grace to things material and sensible, Christ has benevolently accommodated himself to the condition of our nature. Had we been pure spirits, the favours of the Deity would have been equally spiritual. But since the immaterial soul is conjoined to a material body, he imparts his grace, which is entirely spiritual, through the medium of visible and corporeal symbols.

The Catholic Church, on the evidence of the Scripture and the authority of tradition has ever acknowledged and distributed seven sacraments: viz. *Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, the Eucharist, Extreme-unction, Holy-order, and Matrimony*. This small number of sacraments suffices abundantly for all the wants of the soul: which wants, in the order of grace, as those of the body, in the order of nature, are reducible to seven. In the latter, we must be born; we must grow and be fed; when indisposed, we must have remedies to restore our health; and even when cured, farther helps to eradicate the disease, and completely to re-establish us. Moreover, society requires superiors and magistrates to govern it; and lastly, as its members die off, there must be the means to continue and keep up a succession of them. The demands, in the order of grace, which relate to the soul, are exactly similar; and our Saviour has provided for them, by the institution of his sacraments. Baptism confers on us a new birth and existence. Confirmation makes us grow, and strengthens our spiritual life. Penance heals the disorders and infirmities of the soul. The Eucharist is its sustenance. Extreme-unction does away the relicts of that weakness, which sin is apt to leave behind it. Holy-order supplies the Church with ministers, and matrimony with children; the one to direct, the other to renew her, and to perpetuate her duration, till the end of time.

The purport of these sacraments is to effect our sanctification. To this they all tend. But there is a difference in

their operations, which it is requisite to note. First, baptism and penance, as they find us in a state of death, occasioned by sin, reinstate us in the life of grace: while the other sacraments only increase that spiritual life, which we enjoyed on receiving them. Secondly, three of them, viz. baptism, confirmation, and holy-order, besides sanctifying the soul, imprint on it a spiritual mark, that consecrates it to the Deity, in a distinct and special manner. Whoever approaches any one of these sacraments without suitable dispositions, though he receive not sanctifying grace, yet he receives this impression. Moreover, although the grace, thereby acquired, may be lost by sin, the divine character or impression, with which they stamp us, is not to be erased. For which reason, these three sacraments cannot be reiterated; by which I mean that they cannot be received more than once by the same person.

Observe also, Theophilus, that, besides the actions and words, essential to each sacrament, and which are otherwise called their *matter and form*, the Church has superadded a variety of ceremonies, for the farther instruction and edification of the faithful. Although these ceremonies be not absolutely necessary for the effect of the sacraments, they are not the less respectable, on account of their antiquity. The greatest part of them were introduced by the Apostles themselves: and they serve to impress us with a stronger idea of the virtue of these sacred symbols; and sensibly inform us of the dispositions we ought to bring to them, of the effects they produce, and of the obligations they entail upon us.

I return thee thanks, O my God! for having favoured thy Church with such inexhaustible sources of heavenly blessings. By affording me so many means and helps to salvation, thou showest convincingly that thou wishest to save me: and shall I be so blind to my own true welfare, as stupidly to neglect and forego such advantages? No, dear Lord, I will not. On the contrary, I will earnestly strive to turn them to the best account. My first desire shall be to correspond with thy views. I will frequent these divine sources, to draw from them that water, which cleanses the soul from all its defilements. I will there seek light amidst my darkness, strength amidst my frailties and consolation amidst my sufferings. But to be benefited by them, it is necessary that I approach them with proper dispositions. For *Holy things are for the holy*. Grant therefore, I now entreat, that I may never presume to present myself at the distribution of thy sacred treasures, but

with those sentiments of respect, veneration, and piety, which thou demandest of all, that wish to partake of them.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should be thankful to God, for having furnished us with so many means and aids to salvation ; and firmly resolve to take advantage of their assistance.

## CHAPTER LXXII.

### ON THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

*Not by the works of justice, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the laver of regeneration—that, being justified by his grace, we may be heirs according to the hope of everlasting life. Tim. iii. 5—7.*

BAPTISM is the first of the sacraments, and that, which gives us a right to participate in the others.

This sacrament our Saviour instituted, when he said to his Apostles : “ Going, therefore, teach ye all nations ; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”\*—“ He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.† ” Jesus Christ, therefore, established baptism for the salvation of man ; to deliver him from sin, and from that everlasting death, which is the punishment of sin ; and to render him, by a new birth, the child of God and a member of his Church.

Baptism, Theophilus, obliterates in children original sin ; and in adults it also effaces whatever actual sins, they may have committed, since their coming to the use of reason. It remits, moreover, all the punishments due to those sins : for which reason, the Church never did enjoin any satisfaction, or penance to the newly baptized. But it does not take away the effects of original sin ; viz. ignorance and concupiscence, the miseries of life and the horrors of death. These effects

\* Math. xxviii. 19.

† Mark xvi. 16.



God is pleased to leave, after the sin itself is forgiven, for the trial of our virtue, by the combats, we have to sustain, in order to practise it. If baptism freed us from ignorance and from all propensity to evil, we should do what is right without any trouble, and by an instinct, as it were, of nature: and where would be the merit of such actions, did they cost us nothing? But these effects of sin, that still remain, oblige us to assiduous and unremitted exertions, to conquer the difficulties, we unhappily experience in the performance of our duty.

Baptism regenerates us in Christ, and imparts to us a new and spiritual life, according to those words of our Saviour: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.\*" This life of grace, which baptism communicates, consists in a union of the soul with God. For God is the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body. The body is alive, while conjoined to the soul: but, whenever the soul is separated from it, it becomes dead, without motion or sense. In like manner, the soul is alive, as long as it is united to the Deity, by faith, hope, and charity: but when divided from him by sin, it is absolutely dead, and incapable of meriting a future state of happiness.

Finally, baptism imprints upon the soul a character or spiritual mark, which consecrates to God, and distinguishes from others all such, as are baptized. In consequence of this sacred stamp, baptism can be received only once. For what once has been devoted to the service of the Deity, belongs to him for ever by an inalienable right.

Formerly, in the administration of this sacrament, the person baptized was plunged into water; and to this immersion St. Paul alludes, when he says: We are buried together with him (Christ) by baptism unto death: that as Christ is risen from the dead, by the glory of the Father, we also may walk in newness of life: † that is to say, that, by the waters of baptism, we are purified from sin, as Christ, by his death, was divested of our infirmities: and that we come out of the sacred laver, endued with a new life, as Christ, at his resurrection, came forth from his monument, adorned with immortality. Now-a-days, baptism is administered by pouring water on the person's head, and pronouncing at the same

\* St. John iii. 5.

† Rom. vi. 4.

time these operative words : "I baptise thee, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The union of these two parts, the action and the words, is essential to this sacrament. It is the exterior sign, which informs us that the soul is cleansed from sin, while the body is purified by the act of ablution. This rite, by virtue of the institution of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, applies to man the merits of this adorable Saviour ; in order to give him a new life, which makes him a child of God, a member of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost ; and which confers on him a right to the kingdom of heaven, as the heir of the Almighty and the coheir of his Son. So essential is baptism for the salvation of mankind, that even infants must be washed in its purifying waters. Martyrdom, however, that is to say, suffering death for the cause of Christ, would supply the defect of it ; and in adults, the desire even would be sufficient, where they are under an absolute impossibility of being actually baptized.

At the time, O my God ! when thou didst admit me to thy font, I was incapable of understanding the magnitude of this blessing. Thou didst open to me the treasures of thy infinite mercy, before I was able to desire, or to have a knowledge of them. At present, I am convinced of the value of thy gift, and most humbly thank thee for it. I was conceived in sin ; and thou hast freed me from it by baptism. I was born a slave of the devil ; thou hast adopted me for thy child. I received from my parents but a perishable life ; and thou hast given me a life to be perpetuated for ever. Thou hast not done so much, O Lord ! for thousands of others, who are ignorant of thee. It has been my happiness to be born of Christian parents and in the bosom of thy Church. And what had I done to merit this preference ? to thy mercy alone I stand indebted for it. A favour so signal, and, at the same time, so undeserved, demands every proof of the most affectionate gratitude. This I will henceforth testify, by preferring the appellation and title of a Christian to every other distinction ; and by constantly labouring to lead a life conformable to that eminent dignity, to which thy affection has raised me.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should ever be thankful for the grace of our baptism,

## CHAPTER LXXIII.

## ON OUR BAPTISMAL VOWS.

*We are buried with him by baptism—that we may walk in newness of life.* Rom. vi. 4.

You were adopted, at baptism, Theophilus, for the child of God, only on certain conditions, to which you then solemnly pledged yourself. When you were presented at the font, the minister of religion asked you, if you believed in God, the Father Almighty ; in Jesus Christ, our Lord ; and in the Holy Ghost ? You answered, by the mouth of them, that held you, I do believe. To this the priest added ; Dost thou renounce Satan, his pomps and his works ? And you again replied, I do renounce them. You, at that time, therefore declare in the face of the altar, before the Almighty and his angels, that you would abandon the side of the devil to espouse the part of Christ. You promised to condemn the pomps of Satan ; that is, the vanities and maxims of the world : to abjure the works of the spirit of darkness ; that is, every species of iniquity. For you, and in your name, were these promises made. On the day of your baptism, you did not, it is true, enjoy the use of reason : nor, of course, comprehend what was there proposed to you. But your sponsors answered for you : and you yourself have since ratified their then declarations, as often as you have made a public profession of your faith ; and you repeat your assent to them, whenever you sign yourself with the sign of the cross, when you recite the Lord's prayer, when you assist at mass.

It was in consequence of these public and solemn protestations, that God purified you from the guilt, in which you were born ; that he adorned and enriched you with his most precious gifts ; that he impressed on you the seal of those, whom he marks for his children, and adopted you as an heir to his kingdom of bliss. You are no longer your own, therefore. You belong wholly to God. Your mind, your heart, your body are all consecrated to him. Whatever you have or are, ought to be employed in his service. To retain, after baptism, an affection to the pomps of Satan ; to follow, in practice, the

maxims of the world, and to pursue its empty vanities, would be renouncing the title and character of a Christian, and sacrilegiously violating its awful engagements. The divine impression, therein received, would remain, it is true, undefaced : but it would remain only as an evidence of your desertion and perfidy. To yield to sin, after baptism, would be a profanation of our dignity : it would be trampling under foot the blood of Christ, which there flowed for our sanctification ; insulting the Spirit of grace, whose wings then overshadowed us, and driving him far from us, to join with his enemy.

Remember therefore, I entreat you, the vows and declarations, that you made at your baptism. Never forget the obligations, which you thereby contracted. These promises are recorded and enregistered in the book of life. God preserves them in heaven. By them he will judge you, at the hour of dissolution ; and your eternal salvation entirely depends upon your fidelity in observing them. To fix them deeper in your memory, you would do well to renew them, at least once a year, on the day of your baptism. After thanking the Deity for having rescued you, in his great mercy, from the powers of darkness, in order to give you a share in the kingdom of his Son : after ratifying anew the conditions, on which you were admitted into the number of his children, beseech him to engrave on your heart the words, which were addressed to you, in the name of the Church, when vested with the robe of innocence : "Receive this white garment ; and see thou carry it, without stain, to the tribunal of Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life." And those also, that were said to you, on delivering to you the lighted taper : "Receive this burning light : and keep thy baptism without blame : keep the commandments of God, that when the Lord shall come to the nuptials, thou mayest meet him in the company of the Saints, and live for ever and ever."

What confusion, O God ! do I feel at the sight of my past errors ! What is become of my promises ? Where are the treasures thou didst endow me with, at my admission into the Church ? Alas ! O Lord ! Be indulgent to my frailty. Thou beholdest at thy feet a criminal, who most humbly craves forgiveness ; who wishes to make amends for his past disloyalty and ingratitude, and to enter into new and more durable engagements with thee. Yes, my God ! I now repeat and confirm the promises, that were made on my behalf, at the time of my baptism. I once more, and that for ever, renounce

Satan and his pomps ; and I offer myself to thee, to be eternally thine. The devil, thy enemy and mine, shall no longer have dominion over me. I abjure his works, by detesting the sins, that I already have, and still may perhaps, commit. Impress me, O Lord ! with a just abhorrence of those deeds of darkness, that bring destruction on the soul. I renounce the world, its vanities and its maxims. I will accommodate my life to the dictates of thy Gospel. I will live by the life of Christ, and endeavour to adopt his sentiments. I dedicate my whole being to thee, as a living and constant sacrifice, to be made agreeable in thy sight. I will place all my future glory in bearing the name, and in being in reality the child of thy adoption ; and my only pleasure shall consist in loving thee, in confiding in thee, and in nourishing the hope of possessing thee eternally.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we ought frequently to renew our baptismal protestations.

---

## CHAPTER LXXIV.

### ON THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION.

*He that confirmeth us, with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God : who also hath sealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts. 2 Cor. i. 21—22.*

THE second sacrament is called Confirmation ; because it confirms us in faith, and powerfully strengthens in us that spiritual life, which we receive at our baptism. Confirmation finishes what baptism began, as its supplement and perfection. The grace of baptism is a grace of regeneration, which makes us like to new-born children. That of confirmation is a grace of fortitude, which raises us, as Christians, to the state of perfect manhood ; and enables us to combat, and to reap the laurels of victory ; by bearing testimony to Jesus Christ, even at the expense of our life.

Look, my dear Theophilus, into the acts of the Apostles ;

and you will there see the effects, produced upon their minds, by the descent of the Holy Ghost. Prior to his coming, they were fearful and timorous. But as soon as he had visited them, they became totally different, and began immediately to preach up Christ, with a courage not to be daunted. This same divine Spirit continues still to descend on them, that are admitted to confirmation; and he produces the like effects in them, although it be in a manner not to be noticed by our senses; because the miraculous display is no longer essential. Of this we have a proof in the same history of the Acts. We there read that the Apostles, having heard that the people of Samaria had received the word of God, sent Peter and John to them to give them confirmation. "And when they were come," "says the sacred text," they prayed for them, and laid hands upon them; and these new converts received the Holy Ghost.\* This same method the Church of God has at all times observed. Her bishops, in whom alone this power resides, as the successors of the Apostles, have always conferred this sacrament, by the means of fervent prayer and the imposition of hands.

But it may not be improper briefly to explain to you the ceremonies that are used in the administration of this sacred rite. The bishop, turning towards them, that are to be confirmed, and extending his hands over them, says the following prayer. "O Almighty and Eternal God! who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast forgiven them their sins, send down upon them, from heaven, thy sacred Spirit of consolation: the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and of fortitude; the spirit of knowledge and of piety: fill them with the spirit of thy fear; and impress them with the sign of the cross of Jesus Christ, unto life everlasting." After this, with the holy chrism, which is a mixture of oil of olives and the balm of Gilead, he anoints them, singly, on the forehead, saying; "I sign thee with the sign of the cross; I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." These various actions and prayers tend to make us sensible of the effects, of which this sacrament is productive. The imposition of hands denotes the protection of the sacred Spirit, who comes personally to reside in us and to replenish us with his graces;

\* Acts. viii. 14—17.

more especially with those seven, that are peculiarly ascribed to him ; viz. Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and the Fear of the Lord. The holy chrism is expressive of the fruitful abundance, and of the mild, but powerful influence of grace upon the soul, which it penetrates and strengthens, as oil does the body,

The grand effect of confirmation, therefore, is to make us strong and perfect Christians. Until it be received, we continue in a kind of spiritual infancy, subject to all the infirmities of that delicate age; alarmed at the smallest danger, and staggered by the slightest temptation. But a Christian, fortified by this sacrament, feels himself undaunted, and armed with a firm, an invincible resolution. He courageously opposes all the efforts of the devil and the solicitations of his own passions. In a word, he no longer is a weak, a timorous child : he is a man, full of vigour, in a condition to bear arms, and to make head against his enemies. He is not ashamed to submit himself to the direction of the Gospel : he declares himself openly in favour of virtue ; and, by the example of his good behaviour, diffuses all around him the sweet odour of Jesus Christ. The senseless raillery of the wicked is no obstruction to his progress ; he defies their contempt, their threats, and even their attacks upon his person : and were it necessary to suffer death itself, in defence of his faith, he would not hesitate to encounter it, in imitation of the martyrs, rather than dissemble his religion, or blush at his tenets. For it is one of the properties of this sacrament to mark us out for the soldiers of Christ ; and this character, with which it stamps us, is permanent and indelible : for which reason, like baptism, it cannot be reiterated.

O God ! how rich art thou in mercy ! It was not enough for thee to give me a new and spiritual life by baptism ; but thou hast also instituted a sacrament, to augment and to invigorate it. O Sacred Spirit ! the inexhaustible source of every good gift, I open to thee my heart : vouchsafe to take up thy abode in it, and to fill it with the plenitude of thy heavenly graces. *Spirit of wisdom !* grant me this virtue, which is the partner of thy throne. *Spirit of understanding !* enlighten my darkness, and pierce it with the rays of thy celestial brilliancy. *Spirit of counsel !* be my guide, and direct me in the way, in which I ought to walk. *Spirit of Fortitude !* inspire me with courage, to despise the attacks of the licentious, and to confess boldly the faith of Christ, as well by my actions, as by my words. *Spirit of*

*knowledge!* give me the science of the Saints, which consists in being acquainted with thy attributes and perfections. *Spirit of piety!* instill into me an ardent zeal for the honour of thy service, and an animated desire for whatever may please thee. And finally, *O divine Spirit of the fear of the Lord!* fill me with a salutary dread of offending thy omnipotence, and with a just abhorrence of the evil of sin. May this apprehension ever operate as a powerful check, to restrain me, when tempted; or to incite me to rise speedily, should I have the misfortune to fall.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should beg of God to produce in us, or to renew, if already received, the blessed effects of confirmation.

---

## CHAPTER LXXV.

### ON THE DISPOSITIONS REQUISITE FOR CONFIRMATION.

*Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul; nor dwell in a body subject to sin.* Wisdom i. 4.

IN times of early date, the sacrament of confirmation was given immediately after baptism. But this custom has been long since abrogated, and the Church now thinks proper to postpone it, till they, that are to receive it, be old enough to comprehend the sanctity of this sacrament, and to prepare themselves for it by suitable dispositions.

The first of these dispositions is to be completely instructed in the principal mysteries of faith. Wherefore, it is necessary to have learnt and to understand *the Creed*, which is an abridgment of what we are to believe. It is also requisite to know whatever regards *Confirmation*, which is about to be received; as likewise the sacrament of *Penance*, which ought previously to be resorted to. In short, the more the mind is opened, the better informed should they be, who present themselves to be confirmed. Although it sometimes happens that such little children are admitted to it, as cannot



but be ignorant, yet this is a mere indulgence, in consideration of their age and innocence: but this favour, shown to them, exempts not those that are able, from endeavouring to procure every necessary direction. They, that approach to any sacrament, cannot be too well informed about it: and they expose themselves to great danger, if, through their own fault, they be not sufficiently instructed.

A second disposition is to have a conscience clean and pure from the defilements of mortal sin. This part of the preparation is far more important and essential than the foregoing; and such indeed is its consequence, that it cannot be dispensed with. The Holy Ghost, as I have already said, Theophilus, assures us, in direct terms, that *Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sin*: that is to say, it will have no communication with a being, that is wilfully infected with the atrocious stain of guilt. The sacrament of confirmation, is a sacrament of the living; by which I mean that it presupposes a spiritual life, in such as come to receive it; and to increase this spiritual life is its principal effect. Now, as it is not possible to augment the natural life of a person, already deprived of it by death; so neither is it possible to strengthen a Christian in the life of grace, if he has lost it by sin. Wherefore, to be confirmed, it is necessary either to have preserved inviolate the innocence of baptism, or to have regained that guiltless state, by a true and sincere repentance.

How happy are you, my child, if you be still in possession of that invaluable treasure of baptismal integrity. Examine your heart: and run over, in recollection, the whole of your past years. If your conscience does not reproach you with the guilt of any mortal sin, thank God for it heartily. You possess a blessing, that is not to be appreciated; and you will bring with you to the sacrament of confirmation the most excellent of all dispositions. But should you have been so unfortunate as to have lost this precious ornament, no other resource is left you, than to repair to the tribunal of penance, there to purify your soul from its noxious stains, and to recover the favour of heaven; without which you would add to your guilt, by the commission of a sacrilege.

Finally, a third disposition for the sacrament of confirmation is an ardent desire of receiving the Holy Ghost, with all the abundance of his graces. Although confirmation be not so necessary as baptism, to neglect it, nevertheless, is a

grievous sin. For it is disobeying the orders of Christ, who instituted it with a view to strengthen us in the grace of baptism; and who commands us to apply to it, thereby to receive that perfection of virtue, which our spiritual life demands. Besides, were you to consider the greatness of the gifts, that this sacrament confers, and the want you have of them, you would sigh longingly after them, and with all the fervour of desire, you would entreat the Spirit of God to prepare himself a place in your heart, and to replenish it with the effusion of his incomparable riches. It was by such eagerness of zeal and the most earnest supplications that the Apostles disposed themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost. An imitation of their conduct will likewise draw him down to you. He is doubtless a God of bounty, ever ready to distribute his favours: but he requires to be ardently solicited, and implored with perseverance. The best prayer, we can address to him, on this propitious occasion is that, which the Church puts into the mouth of her children, on the solemn feast of Pentecost. But let your heart, in repeating it, have a greater share in it than your lips.

*Come, O holy Spirit! visit the souls of thy faithful; and fill with thy heavenly grace those hearts, which thou hast created. Thou art the Spirit of consolation, the gift of the most High, the source of all blessings, the sacred fire, the charity and the spiritual unction of the soul. Come with thy sevenfold gifts; thou finger of the Almighty, who pointest out our duty; thou promise of the Father, who dost suggest what we ought to say. Enlighten our understanding with thy brightness: inflame our hearts with thy love: support our weakness, and give to our frail flesh a strength superior to its enemies. Keep at a distance from us the seducements of Satan: grant us an unalterable peace: make us diligently shun, under the guidance of thy care, every thing hurtful to our souls. Instruct us in the knowledge of the Father; and of his Son, Jesus Christ, and confirm our faith in thyself, who art the Spirit of them both, and the eternal bond of their union. Come, O holy Spirit! fill the hearts of thy faithful, and kindle in them the flames of thy pure and celestial love.*

#### *The Practical Inference.*

That, when we address ourselves to the Holy Ghost in the language of the Church, we should be careful to do it with attention and fervour.

## CHAPTER LXXVI.

## ON THE OBLIGATIONS OF CONFIRMATION.

*Every one, therefore, that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father, who is in heaven. And whoever shall deny me before men, I will also deny him, before my Father, who is in heaven. Math. x. 32, 33.*

THE sacrament of confirmation, while it enables us to confess Christ, even at the hazard of our lives, enjoins it also as a duty. A Christian, confirmed in his faith, is under the obligation of defending it, if he falls into the company either of unbelievers, that impugn its tenets, or libertines, that combat its morality. Jesus Christ laid this injunction on his Apostles, when he promised them his holy Spirit. "You shall receive," he said to them, "the Holy Ghost; and you shall bear testimony to me in Jerusalem, and in Samaria, and to the farthestmost confines of the earth." What is it to bear testimony to Christ, unless it be courageously to defend his doctrine against all such as presume to attack it; and, in support of his cause, to fear neither scorn nor menaces, nor even the terrors of death, in its most frightful appearance. The dreadful punishment, with which he threatens those, that may be wanting in this duty, shows how indispensable it is. "Every one, therefore, that shall confess me before men," he says in the words above recited, "I will also confess him before my Father: and whoever shall deny me before man, I will also deny him before my Father, who is in heaven." Hence we see, it is a crime, highly displeasing in the eyes of Jesus Christ, not to own him in the face of the world, and not to declare ourselves for him, should he be insulted in our presence.

You have no longer, my dear Theophilus, any reason to fear being molested on the score of your religion. The equity of an enlightened legislature, and the benevolence of an indulgent government, have silenced such apprehensions. But there still exist dangers, which, though of a less menacing aspect, are more perilous in their nature. For you will often meet with persons, whose principles are vitiated,

and who will seek to corrupt yours, by the language of impiety. The fallacious sophistry of such people as these, and their artful insinuations, are frequently more injurious to the budding mind of youth, than the cold blast of oppression. But oppose to them a courage worthy of a soldier of Jesus Christ. Maintain resolutely the interest and the honour of your master. Tell them, with a modesty becoming your age, what you have been taught in the instructions given you on the subject of religion. A few words from the mouth of an innocent and artless child, may be attended with a better effect, by the assistance of Heaven, than the most studied harangues. At least, show, by a reserved and serious air, that you abhor all profaneness and the very shadow of infidelity. Would you bear patiently to hear aspersed the reputation of a beloved parent? I cannot think you would. How, then, can you be unconcerned, when the God, that made you, who is your most affectionate parent, and will be your eternal reward, is insulted in your presence?

You may find, perhaps, among those of your own age, presumptuous striplings, who will laugh at such, as are virtuous, and wantonly make them the objects of their derision. But fear not such censors; nor pay any regard to their scoffs. Alas! Did you but see into their hearts; the shameful passions, that enslave them; the secret inquietude, that haunts, and the unrelenting remorse, that persecutes them; so far from dreading their censures, you would compassionate their blindness; and the sight of the miseries, to which they are exposed, would only serve to confirm you in the admiration of virtue. It is by these means, chiefly, that is, by the purity of your morals and the regularity of your conduct, that you are to confess Jesus Christ; and to win over to him, if possible, or, at least to confound them, that calumniate his doctrine. Example is more efficacious and more persuasive than words: nor does any thing do so much credit, or give such support to our divine religion, as a virtuous life. This is what St. James calls showing, proving, and preaching the faith by works. To encourage yourself to a constant discharge of the engagements of confirmation, remember that the bishop, in conferring it, marked, with the holy chrism, the sign of the cross upon your forehead; to intimate that you were neither to be ashamed of your faith, nor to disgrace it by a behaviour unworthy of the Gospel. Defend therefore, and

sustain it by the judiciousness of your discourse, and still more by the integrity and the edification of your deportment.

Spirit of fortitude ! who didst endue the Apostles with a virtue from on high, and enable them to brave contempt, torments and death, in the propagation of the Gosple, give me some portion of this invincible courage, that I never may be led astray by the conversation of the wicked. Their raillery, I confess, does some times intimidate me : human respects, at others, prevent me from owning virtue openly, in the face of them, that deride it. But, O Lord ! thou canst give strength to the weakest. The Apostles were full of fears, before thou didst visit and fill them with thy gifts. But, by thy Sovereign power, thou changedst their timidity into boldness, and their weakness into strength. Deign, O God ! to produce the like effects in me. Grant me grace to despise the solicitations of the profligate, and never to be ashamed of either my faith or its mandates. Make me do honour to my religion by the consistency of my works, and support the illustrious character and dignity of a Christian, by a resolute adherence to the doctrines of Christianity. If there is any thing to be suffered from the profane and irreligious, ought I not to think myself happy in having a share in the contempt, which my Saviour endured for me ?

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should disregard the ridicule and derision of the impious.

---

## CHAPTER LXXVII.

### ON THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

*Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them.*  
John xx. 23.

NOT satisfied with having given us a spiritual life by baptism, the Almighty has moreover provided us with the means to regain it, if unhappily lost by sin. The sacrament of Pe-

nance, ordained by him for this purpose, has the power of remitting whatever crimes we may be guilty of, after the ablution of the sacred font. How great, Theophilus, and incomprehensible are the mercies of our God ! What sentiments of gratitude ought they not to excite within us ? It was already a favour done us of infinite estimation, that God should show us a compassion, which he refused to the rebel-angels: that he should give us a Redeemer, and apply his merits to us, by the means of a previous sacrament. He might have forsaken those, who, after this first grace, should have defiled themselves anew. But no. He has not listened to the voice of his justice. He is willing to receive his rebellious creatures, as often as they return to him ; and has prepared a saving plank for them, after the shipwreck of their innocence. Such is the expression of the holy fathers, in speaking of this sacrament ; inasmuch as it is the only resource, that a Christian has left, who has lost the grace of baptism.

This conciliatory sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ, after his resurrection from the dead ; when, breathing on his Apostles, he spoke to them thus : " Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them ; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."\* By these words, he appointed them the judges of sin ; and gave to them and to their successors, the power of remitting, or retaining its guilt ; with a promise to ratify the sentence in heaven, which they should pronounce upon earth. To this same purpose he had, during his life time, said to St. Peter : " I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven : and whatever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."† Penance, therefore, is a sacrament, that takes away our sins. But what sins, you may say ? All actual sins, I reply, without exception. Yes, my dear child, this sacrament, by the institution of the Son of God, has the virtue of remitting all sorts of sins. There is no crime so enormous, so atrociously black, that it cannot efface ; and this not only once, but as often as we resort to it with proper dispositions. Mortal sins are the matter, upon which it principally acts. Whoever is conscious of such crimes, as destroy the life of the soul, cannot otherwise obtain forgiveness, than by applying to the sacrament. " Let no

\* John *xx.* 22—23.

† Mark *xvi.* 19.

one tell me," says St. Austin, " I do penance by myself ; I do penance in the sight of God. That is not sufficient. We must have recourse to the sacrament. For shall Christ have said unmeaningly to his apostles and their successors, ' Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven ? ' Shall he in vain have entrusted the keys of heaven to his Church ? "

As the sins, committed previously to baptism, can only be obliterated by that first of all the sacraments ; so the sins, subsequent to that period, can only be effaced by the sacrament of penance. I speak of mortal sins, however. For as to venial sins, the forgiveness of them may be obtained by prayer and good works. Nevertheless, it is advisable to subject them humbly to the power of the keys : first, because it is often extremely difficult to distinguish venial from mortal sin : and secondly, because the absolution thereby received from them tends to give us additional energy. The sacrament of penance, therefore, is like a second baptism, offered to them, that have had the misfortune to lose the advantage of the first. But take notice, Theophilus, this second baptism is rigorous, and full of labour and pain, requiring tears and strong exertions. While, desirous to display his mercy, the Almighty, by the first baptism, acquits the sinner wholly, without reserving any thing to his justice ; in the second, by a conduct, in which these two attributes are blended, he receives him into favour again only upon hard conditions and humiliating terms. " In fact," says the Council of Trent, " the justice of God requires that he should pursue a different method in his treatment of those, who, before their baptism, transgressed through mere ignorance ; and in his reception of such, as having already been liberated from the servitude of sin, and replenished with the graces of his beneficent Spirit, dare anew to profane his temple, and to contristate the Holy Ghost." Besides, the rigours of penance are not only a proper remedy for the expiation of past sins : they are also a kind of curb, which checks the baneful progress of vice ; which puts a restraint upon the passions, and compels a man to be more watchful, and more resolutely firm, in resisting the allurements and temptations, that environ him.

Alas ! O Lord ! How unhappy should we be, if, after losing the grace of baptism, we had no means to recover it ! Thou mightest have delivered us for once from the tyranny of the devil, and then have abandoned us, if, through our own fault, we should have forfeited that grace : and to ourselves alone

would the whole blame have been imputable. But thou knowest our frailty ; and thou art rich in mercy. Thou hast opened the way for our return, by the institution of a sacrament, which is possessed of the power to remit all our sins, and completely to reinstate us in our pristine integrity. O goodness ! O mercy of my God ! What advantage will the salvation of thy creatures be to thee, that, in their behalf, thou shouldest sacrifice the rights of thy justice ? It is true that, in order to this second reconciliation, thou demandest compunctive sighs and trying exertions. But is it not just that an ungrateful wretch, who has abused thy indulgence, should be treated with greater severity, than one, who has not been favoured with the marks of thy bounty ? No, dear Lord ! nothing will I think too much to recover my lost righteousness. I will cheerfully submit to all the mortifications of penance ; happy, if, by so doing, I can appease thy injured mercy.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should frequently have recourse to the sacrament of penance.

---

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

ON CONTRITION.

*Know thou and see that is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord, thy God. Jeremiah ii. 19.*

To obtain pardon of sin, three conditions are required. First, the sinner must hate and detest his sins, by contrition. Secondly, he must make them known to a priest of God, by confession. And thirdly, he must atone, as far as in him lies, for the injury done to the Almighty and to his neighbour, by satisfaction. You would be glad, no doubt, my child, to have each of these parts of the sacrament of penance made clear and easy to you. I will endeavour therefore to do it ; beginning by contrition, which is the first and the most essential of them.



*Contrition* is a sorrow for, and a detestation of, sin committed, with a firm resolution of never more being guilty of it. This leading disposition is so absolutely necessary, that, without it, no sin, not even venial, can possibly be forgiven. An illness, that takes away the faculty of speech, dispenses from confession. A sudden death would exempt from the duty of satisfaction, at least as to this life. But nothing can excuse us from the obligation of contrition. That soul alone, which is penetrated with sorrow for the great evil it has done, gives glory, says the Prophet, to the justice of the Lord. To whom does God promise, in his sacred word, the pardon of their sins? To those only, who are converted to him with all their heart, with the sobs and tears of a bitter repentance: to those only, who rend their hearts, and not their garments. To whom do we there read that he ever granted this forgiveness? To such, alone, as bewailed their crimes with the groanings of compunction. Hear, Theophilus, the expressions of undisguised repentance: "Father," says the returning prodigal, "I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee. I am not now worthy to be called thy son."\* "To thee only," David says, "have I sinned, and my sin is always before me."† What profound sentiments of sorrow are contained in these few words?

Contrition, to be such as suffices, must possess four qualities. It must be *internal*; that is to say, it must be seated in the heart, and not on the lips only. It is not enough to read over, or to repeat acts of contrition: for it is the heart, that has sinned; and the heart must be the residence of the sorrow conceived for sin. Contrition must be *supernatural*; that is, it must be the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and not merely a natural impulse. To detest sin, because it has occasioned us some temporal inconvenience; such as a reprimand, an illness, a loss of property, &c., is not a contrition, that will suffice to obtain its forgiveness. We must repent of it for the love of God; inasmuch as it is an outrage offered to him, and displeases him infinitely. Contrition must be *sovereign*; by which I mean to say, that it must be superior to every other grief, and such as cordially to dispose us to make any imaginable sacrifice, rather than be guilty of it again. In fact, sin is the greatest of all evils; and it brings with it the loss of the most valuable of all goods, even our

\* Luke xv, 21.

† Ps. l. 5, 6.

Supreme Good. Wherefore, the consciousness of having committed it, ought to be more afflicting and distressing, than the pressure of all the miseries, to which this life can subject us. However, it is not necessary that this sorrow should affect us sensibly, nor otherwise discover itself than by the testimony of our actions, which are the criterion whereby to judge of it. Finally, contrition must be *universal*; that is to say, it must include all the mortal sins, of whatever kind, with which our conscience may reproach us. Our contrition is not sincere, if there be any mortal sin, to which the heart remains attached; because every mortal sin, is an insult to the Deity, and deserving of hell-fire; and of course, there is not one, that we are not bound to abhor, if we wish to be restored to the favour of Heaven.

To procure this contrition, Theophilus, you must beg it of the Almighty, the giver of all good gifts, by fervent and humble prayer. We are very able, of ourselves, to offend God by sin; but we cannot, without his help, repent of it, as we ought. In the next place, you must ponder well the motives, that are calculated to produce it. Consider, then, who it is that you have insulted. It is your Creator, your Father, your Benefactor, who has heaped his favours on you; your Saviour, who has redeemed you at the price of his own blood. How enormous, therefore, is your ingratitude! Consider again what you have lost by sin. An everlasting happiness was destined for you, and you have forfeited your claim to it. What a loss! Consider to what sin exposes you. The fire of hell is its punishment, in the eternal mansions of despair. How dreadful a doom! It is not possible to reflect seriously on truths so affecting, without conceiving an abhorrence and detestation of sin.

Contrition is different, according to the difference of the motives, on which it is founded. It is *perfect*, when we are sorry for having offended God, because he is infinitely good: and, when built on this foundation, it justifies the sinner, independently even of the sacrament: provided, nevertheless, that he desire and receive it, whenever an opportunity shall offer. It is *imperfect*, when it results only from the shame of having sinned; or from the fear of being punished, &c., and this kind of contrition does not justify of itself; but it disposes the sinner for justification, through the medium of the sacrament: on the supposition, however, that it contains all the qualities required for a genuine contrition.

Give me, O Lord! thyself that contrition, which is necessary to merit the forgiveness of my sins. Pierce me with the most lively sorrow, at the sight of my iniquities. Make me feel that detestation and abhorrence, they deserve; and inspire me with the resolution of renouncing them for ever. My heart will continue insensible, unless thou touchest it by thy grace; and my will bent on evil, unless thou helpst it to break its bonds. Soften, then, the obduracy and hardness of the one, by the penetrating virtue of thy unction; and burst the chains of the other by the irresistible efficacy of thy power. Make me thoroughly sensible of the deformity of sin; and tremblingly apprehensive of the direful punishments, that await it. I have offended thee, who art my God, my Creator, my Supreme and Sovereign Good. I have forfeited my right to the inheritance of heaven. I have deservedly incurred the chastisements of hell. *Have mercy on me, O Lord! have mercy on me.* I abhor my past iniquity. I renounce it eternally; and confiding in thy goodness, I will henceforth love and serve thee with fidelity, during the remainder of my life.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That our principal endeavour, when we are preparing for confession, should be to acquire a contrition of heart.

---

## CHAPTER LXXIX.

### ON PURPOSES OF AMENDMENT.

*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him.* Isaias. lv. 7.

CONTRITION, as I have already hinted, must include a purpose of amendment, that is to say, a firm resolution of sinning no more. But observe, Theophilus, attentively, that the disposition I am going to speak of, must be a fixed determination of the will, and not a transient desire. We cannot

hope to obtain the forgiveness of our sins, unless we renounce them from our hearts. Nor must we look for a pardon, unless we enter sincerely into the sentiments of David, when he said to the Almighty God: "I have sworn, and am determined to keep the judgments of thy justice."\* Upon the necessity of this change of mind the Deity explains himself clearly, in the words above recited: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him."† He therefore, alone, has room to look for mercy, who renounces his iniquity, and abjures it from his heart. Besides, would it not be insulting the divine Majesty, to implore his pardon for sins, that we are disposed to repeat? to deprecate his wrath, which we are again ready to provoke?

But how shall we distinguish a firm resolution from a feeble desire? There are three marks, I answer, whereby to know it assuredly: the first of which is a change and alteration of life. Such a one formerly was proud, passionate, intractable, neglectful of his duties and regardless of religion. He is become humble, mild, obedient, industrious at work and attentive to his devotions. Here, I say, is a sure evidence, an indubitable proof of the sincerity of his resolutions. A second mark is to avoid the occasions, that are the usual avenues to sin. And of these there are two sorts. Those of the first kind lead to sin of themselves; such as immodest books, lascivious songs or pictures, indecent plays and bad company. Those of the second class are no otherwise the occasions of sin, than through the particular dispositions and habits of the persons, that unluckily are involved in them: as certain professions, which, though lawful in themselves, become the occasions of offending God to such, as are unqualified to discharge their obligations. All these occasions we are bound to relinquish: and to continue in them voluntarily is a certain conviction that our purposes of amendment go no farther than the tongue.

The Holy Ghost tells us that "he who loves the danger, shall perish in it." We may sometimes find it hard to withdraw from such occasions. But we must resolve on making the sacrifice, unless we would risk our eternal welfare and abandon our future hopes. This is the meaning of those words of Christ; "If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee,

\* Ps. cxviii. 106.

† Is. lv. 7.

Give me, O Lord! thyself that contrition, which is necessary to merit the forgiveness of my sins. Pierce me with the most lively sorrow, at the sight of my iniquities. Make me feel that detestation and abhorrence, they deserve; and inspire me with the resolution of renouncing them for ever. My heart will continue insensible, unless thou touchest it by thy grace; and my will bent on evil, unless thou helpest it to break its bonds. Soften, then, the obduracy and hardness of the one, by the penetrating virtue of thy unction; and burst the chains of the other by the irresistible efficacy of thy power. Make me thoroughly sensible of the deformity of sin; and tremblingly apprehensive of the direful punishments, that await it. I have offended thee, who art my God, my Creator, my Supreme and Sovereign Good. I have forfeited my right to the inheritance of heaven. I have deservedly incurred the chastisements of hell. *Have mercy on me, O Lord! have mercy on me.* I abhor my past iniquity. I renounce it eternally; and confiding in thy goodness, I will henceforth love and serve thee with fidelity, during the remainder of my life.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That our principal endeavour, when we are preparing for confession, should be to acquire a contrition of heart.

---

## CHAPTER LXXIX:

### ON PURPOSES OF AMENDMENT.

*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him.* Isaias. lv. 7.

CONTRITION, as I have already hinted, must include a purpose of amendment, that is to say, a firm resolution of sinning no more. But observe, Theophilus, attentively, that the disposition I am going to speak of, must be a fixed determination of the will, and not a transient desire. We cannot

hope to obtain the forgiveness of our sins, unless we renounce them from our hearts. Nor must we look for a pardon, unless we enter sincerely into the sentiments of David, when he said to the Almighty God: "I have sworn, and am determined to keep the judgments of thy justice."\* Upon the necessity of this change of mind the Deity explains himself clearly, in the words above recited: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him."† He therefore, alone, has room to look for mercy, who renounces his iniquity, and abjures it from his heart. Besides, would it not be insulting the divine Majesty, to implore his pardon for sins, that we are disposed to repeat? to deprecate his wrath, which we are again ready to provoke?

But how shall we distinguish a firm resolution from a feeble desire? There are three marks, I answer, whereby to know it assuredly: the first of which is a change and alteration of life. Such a one formerly was proud, passionate, intractable, neglectful of his duties and regardless of religion. He is become humble, mild, obedient, industrious at work and attentive to his devotions. Here, I say, is a sure evidence, an indubitable proof of the sincerity of his resolutions. A second mark is to avoid the occasions, that are the usual avenues to sin. And of these there are two sorts. Those of the first kind lead to sin of themselves; such as immodest books, lascivious songs or pictures, indecent plays and bad company. Those of the second class are no otherwise the occasions of sin, than through the particular dispositions and habits of the persons, that unlookily are involved in them: as certain professions, which, though lawful in themselves, become the occasions of offending God to such, as are unqualified to discharge their obligations. All these occasions we are bound to relinquish: and to continue in them voluntarily is a certain conviction that our purposes of amendment go no farther than the tongue.

The Holy Ghost tells us that "he who loves the danger, shall perish in it." We may sometimes find it hard to withdraw from such occasions. But we must resolve on making the sacrifice, unless we would risk our eternal welfare and abandon our future hopes. This is the meaning of those words of Christ; "If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee,

\* Ps. cxviii. 106.

† Is. lv. 7.

cut it off, and cast it from thee. If thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and throw it away.—It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than to be cast into everlasting fire.”\* That is to say, although the object that gives you scandal, be as dear to you and as useful, as any thing you can imagine, still you must separate yourself from it, if you wish to save your soul.

Finally, the third mark of the sincerity of our good resolutions is a serious application to eradicate bad habits, or that facility, we may have contracted, of committing certain sins, into which we relapse by an almost natural propensity. To effect this, we must keep a constant eye upon ourselves, and carefully watch the various motions of our heart. And to facilitate the mastery over our stubborn passions, it will be highly proper often to do such things, as are contrary to those bad habits; for example, to practise meekness, if prone to anger; obedience, if ungovernable, &c., and to enjoin ourselves some penance, whenever we may have yielded to the prevalence of such ill customs. But where no attempts are made to conquer them; where our falls are as frequent as ever; where we neglect to repent of, and to get absolved from them by confession, there is an undoubted certainty that our resolutions were defective, if not wholly illusory.

O my God! I now make, in thy presence, a firm determination to avoid my past errors, and to serve thee, in future, with an inviolable fidelity. I will, from this moment, change my life, and labour in earnest to overcome my bad inclinations. I renounce all such books, such companions, such entertainments, as have already been the occasions of my falling into sin. But, dear Lord! all my precautions will be vain, unless thy Almighty arm support me. Give efficacy to my resolutions. They are the effects of thy kindness. Grant me, then, the grace of adhering to them unalterably. Defend me, by thy protection, against the snares of the devil, against the dangers of the world, and, above all, against the perils of my own miserable frailty. For from this source chiefly my apprehensions alarm me. But thou art able to sustain my weakness, how deplorable soever; and thou hast promise that thou wilt. This reflection consoles me, and animates my confidence; since supported by thy power I know nothing can hurt me.

\* Math. viii. 8, 9.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we ought daily to renew our good purposes of amendment.

---

## CHAPTER LXXX.

## ON CONFESSION.

*I have said I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord; and thou hast forgiven me the wickedness of my sin.* Ps. xxxi. 5.

THE second part of the sacrament of penance is *Confession*, or the declaration of our sins to the minister of God.

To him, therefore, we must accuse ourselves of all our mortal sins; even of such as lie concealed at the bottom of our heart, as evil thoughts and bad desires. This obligation ensues, of course, from the power granted by Christ, to his ministers of forgiving or retaining sins, as mentioned in the Gospel. By that official commission, as I may call it, they are appointed judges of the consciences of mankind. But this duty they cannot discharge, without knowing the state of the causes, upon which they are authorized to decide: and this again they cannot be acquainted with but by the voluntary confession of the sinner himself. Such has ever been the doctrine and the practice of the Church.

Taught by her, then, we believe that to obtain the pardon of our transgressions, we must confess them all candidly, without reserve or disguise: and that, if we voluntarily conceal any one single mortal sin, we look in vain for forgiveness; and even aggravate our guilt, by the addition of a sacrilege. Moreover, the number of our sins, their kind, and the more considerable circumstances, if any such attend them, are also to be declared. The number I say; by telling as nearly as possible, how often we have committed each sin: the kind; for it is not enough to say, in general terms, that we are guilty of many sins; but we must specify particularly what sort of sins we have fallen into, whether of



swearing, lying, detraction, &c., without which neither the state of our conscience can be known, nor proper remedies administered. We must mention also the circumstances, should there be any of importance. And of these there are two sorts. Some of them are of that moment, as to alter the nature of a sin; as for instance, to rob a church is not a simple theft; it is a sacrilege, which is a crime of a much fouler die. Others augment the guilt of a sin, without changing its species; for example, to steal a guinea from any one is a theft in its nature, and a very considerable one; but to steal it from a poor person, whose main dependence it may, perhaps, be, is an offence far more atrocious, than to take it from a rich man, whom it may not injure very materially; and this would be a circumstance to be explained in confession.

Wherefore, Theophilus, to acquit yourself properly of this important duty, a careful examination and inquiry into your conscience is indispensably necessary. Without this, you would be liable to overlook many of your sins; of course, you would not confess them, and in consequence of this neglect, the guilt of them would still attach to you. Instead of recovering the grace of God, you would thus multiply your demerits with him. Previously, then, to your approaching the tribunal of penance, you should make it your business to retire from company, to banish from your mind all impertinent thoughts, and alone with your conscience, to implore the light of Heaven, to search diligently into the commandments of God, the precepts of his Church, and the obligations of your state of life; that you may see wherein you have failed; in fine, to discover all your faults, their number and the circumstances attending them. For your scrutiny must extend to all these different objects.

But this inquiry should be made without disquietude or uneasiness. If you have performed what depended on yourself; if you have employed upon this concern the attention and time, that a work of such moment requires, you ought to rest satisfied. You have to do with a tender parent, who, though he forbids you to be careless, does not wish you to be anxious. All he commands is, that you examine yourself attentively; that you sincerely confess all the faults, of which you are conscious; that you detest them cordially, and be fully determined to avoid, in future, both the sins themselves and the occasions leading to them. These conditions fulfilled,

although, through forgetfulness, some of your transgressions may have happened to escape your notice at the time of confession, yet they are to be considered as remitted and forgiven with the rest. "For the sins," says the Council of Trent, "that do not occur to a person, who makes a careful search into them, are supposed, in general, to be included in his confession: and it is for these we say with the Psalmist; 'From my hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord.'"<sup>\*</sup> It is sufficient to declare the oversight on your next application to the sacred tribunal.

O my God! I will throw myself at thy feet, in the person of thy minister. Thou hast given him the power to effect my cure: but to do this effectually he must be acquainted with my maladies. These, then, I will open to him by a full declaration and discovery of my guilt. Direct my heart and tongue, that this confession may be vested with the properties required: that I may accuse myself honestly of all my known transgressions; that I may not seek to excuse them, or to extenuate their enormity; that I may not relate them with indifference and a criminal insensibility, but may declare them in a spirit of penance, and in the bitterness of my soul. Make me docile to the instructions, thou mayest give me by thy servant, and penetrable to the impressions, he may endeavour to excite in me. Grant him, O Lord! thy light, to see clearly the state of my soul, and to prescribe proper remedies to the disorders, that infest it. Inspire him with the zeal, which touches, which pierces, which changes the heart; that he may, once for all, fix mine in the abhorrence of vice, and in the most unaffected esteem for righteousness and virtue.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That, after a serious examen, we must accuse ourselves humbly and sincerely of all our faults.

## CHAPTER LXXXI.

## ON THE CRIME OF CONCEALMENT IN CONFESSION.

*Be not ashamed to confess thy sins. Eccl. iv. 31.—He, that hideth his sins, shall not prosper: but he, that shall confess and forsake them, shall obtain mercy. Prov. xxviii. 13.*

I HAVE already told you, my dear Theophilus, that willingly to conceal any one mortal sin is not only to frustrate the intentions of the sacrament, and render void the absolution, received in the confessional; but also to become guilty of an additional crime, and that of the deepest die; viz. a sacrilege, a vile profanation of the mercies of the Deity. In this case, instead of appeasing the anger of Heaven, we should most daringly outrage it: we should trample on the sacred blood of the incarnate Son of God; which, thus lighting on an unworthy and unqualified object, is more criminally profaned, than when shed by the Jews so ignominiously on Mount Calvary.

Nevertheless, how many young people are guilty of this atrociousness! And what are the causes of an evil so deplorable? In some of them it is the shame of confessing certain faults. The devil, that spirit of malevolence, and the father of lies, diminishes in their eyes the enormity of the sin, before they commit it; and, when it comes to be confessed, he is no less industrious in unveiling all its foulness.

But there is nothing worse grounded than this ill-conceived shame. Attend, my child, to the reasons, that ought to enable you to get the better of it. The confessor is obliged by every tie, both by the internal voice of conscience, and the external force of human laws, to the most inviolable secrecy. To declare our sins to him, is like declaring them to nobody. Out of the sacred tribunal, he can make no sort of use of what may have been mentioned to him. Neither insults nor reproaches are to be apprehended from him. Charity alone and mildness will dictate his instructions, and influence his advice. The person, to whom you accuse yourself, is not a spotless angel: he is a man, like yourself, subject to the weak-

ness and imperfections of human nature ; and, of course, ready to commiserate and to sympathize with yours. He is a faithful friend, whose sole wish is to reclaim and to bring you back to virtue. He is a benevolent parent, who will be affected by the confidence, which you repose in his kindness, and will be happy to assist you in your urgent distress.

But allow me to ask you a question. Would shame withhold you from discovering to a physician any secret ailment, you might be afflicted with ; especially, was death to be apprehended from your concealment of it ? Would not the desire of life overpower so illtimed a silence, and hush all such repugnances ? How then can you suffer shame to master you, when your inestimable soul has received a mortal wound ? Or how not find courage to lay open its disorders to a person, that is competent to administer relief to them ? Besides, what advantage will you gain by keeping, at present, from the eyes of your confessor the knowledge of your sins ? Can you conceal them from the sight of God ? And must not these very crimes, which you are so averse to disclose, be sooner or later, at least, confessed, if you pretend to salvation ? O God ! impress forcibly these reflections on the minds of all those, whom this lecture may reach ; and may they effectually operate to preserve them from the misfortune of being overcome by a false shame.

Others again there are, whom the fear of not being permitted to participate in the sacred mysteries deters from exposing their guilt to the sight of their director. But there can be nothing more absurd, nothing more criminal than thus impiously to profane two sacraments, on such frivolous apprehensions. Alas, O Lord ! What a disposition to bring to thy table, to come to it under the cover of a dissimulation so atrocious ! Would it not be infinitely better to defer approaching it for a time, than to render ourselves culpable of so dreadful a sacrilege ? The consequence of it would be that we should reproach ourselves with it the remainder of our life ; or grow hardened in vice, and be eternally damned. On the other side, he, who has frankly and candidly unbosomed himself to his confessor, and taken proper time to sound the depth of his resolutions, is handsomely repaid for the little trial, he submitted to. The delay was but short ; it is over and done with ; and nothing now remains but the testimony of a good conscience, and the approbation of his heart. He is happy in being assured that his communion was performed

according to the dictates of religion : his mind is at ease : during the rest of his days, he will bless the fortunate hour, in which he gained a victory over himself, that ensures him tranquillity in this life, and the bliss of heaven in a future. You are convinced, I hope Theophilus, that there is no room for hesitation, and firmly resolved to lay open to your director whatever sins you may be conscious of. Treasure up carefully in your mind what I have said upon this subject : and let sincerity, the most unreserved sincerity, be your guide, whenever you present yourself at the tribunal of confession, without listening to shame or to the suggestions of the devil.

No, my God ! never will I pay attention to any repugnance, that I may experience, in the declaration of my sins. Drive far from me this dumb devil, who would wish to tie my tongue, and to render me guilty of a most horrible sacrilege. Grant I may be accessible to no other fear, than that of thy judgments, and of those never-ending punishments, with which thou threatenest the sinner. No, Lord ! I will conceal nothing from the priest, who is thy vicegerent in the confessional. Far from me all dissimulation. I am sensible that to declare my faults to him is to declare them to thyself : and how can I expect to hide, or to disguise them from thee : from thee, O God ! I say, who knowest them better than I do, and whose penetrative eye views the bottom of my heart ? If there be any confusion attending this discovery, is it not just that I should submit to it for the expiation of my crimes ? Had I not better put up with a momentary shame, than expose myself hereafter to an eternal confusion ? But even this humiliation thou hast made bearable and light. For it is to one only person that this confession need be made : to a person, restricted by all kind of considerations to an indispensable secrecy : to a sinner, like myself, who has his own infirmities to bewail, and who is disposed to pity mine. This trifling uneasiness will be amply recompensed by the comfort my heart will experience : my conscience will be lightened of a burden, that oppressed it ; and I shall return from the confessional full of joy and consolation.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That so far from yielding to the temptation of concealing certain sins, we should begin our confession by a sincere avowal of them.

## CHAPTER LXXXII.

## ON SATISFACTION.

*Bring forth fruit worthy of penance. Matt. iii. 8.*

SATISFACTION, which is the third part of the sacrament of Penance, is a reparation of the injury done, by sin, to God or to our neighbour. To satisfy for our transgressions, therefore, is either to do or to suffer something, with a view to appease the divine wrath, irritated by our crimes; or to make amends to our neighbour for whatever harm, we may have occasioned him. And this satisfaction is so necessary, to obtain the forgiveness of our faults, through the sacrament of penance, that without being willing, at least, to make it, our hopes of pardon would be in vain. For as it has pleased the Almighty, who alone remits our sins, and who, indisputably, is the master of his own conditions; as it has pleased him, I say, to impose this duty on us; so it is essentially requisite that we accede to his terms, if we desire to find mercy from him, and to regain his lost favour.

In the sacrament of baptism, God dispenses with satisfaction. For which reason, the ministers of the Church never pretend to assign any penance to such, as are admitted to the font, whatever crimes they may stand charged with. But it is not the same with regard to the tribunal of penance. The Almighty, by his sacred rite, remits, together with our sins, only the eternal punishment due to them; subjecting us, at the same time, by the order of his justice, to a temporal infliction. Many passages of the Scripture evince the truth of this assertion; but one may suffice to prove it. David had the misfortune to commit the grievous crimes of adultery and murder. God immediately commands the prophet Nathan to wait upon and to represent his guilt to him. David humbles himself, upon the spot, and confesses his iniquity. Upon which, the prophet tells him that the Almighty has forgiven him: "Nevertheless," he adds "because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing the child, that is born to thee, shall surely die."\* In

\* 2 Kings xii. 14.

fact, the remainder of his life was an almost continued scene of disasters, according to the prediction of Nathan, for the expiation of his crimes, although the Deity had pardoned them. There remains, as we see, therefore, a temporal chastisement due to sin, after the eternal punishment is remitted, by the sentence of absolution. They, that die before they have endured this temporal infliction, undergo it in the next life; and complete, in the flames of purgatory, the atonement of their faults. Nor is it otherwise than consistent with the dictates of divine justice that such, as have abused the original grace of baptism, should be admitted to a reconciliation only upon harsher conditions.

Besides, the mercy of the Sovereign Being affords to the penitent sinner, even in the chastisements, to which it subjects him, ample matter of advantage. He finds therein a curb to the impetuosity of his passions, and an antidote to the poison of his inveterate habits. For the satisfaction, enjoined him, should be calculated not only to atone for the sins, he may have perpetrated; but likewise to eradicate the vicious propensity, that has led him to commit them: such as humiliations for pride, alms-deeds for avarice, fasting for intemperance, the mortification of his senses for impurity, &c., and these penances ought also to bear a certain proportion to the crimes; that is, they ought to be more or less severe, according to the grievousness of the offences, or the frequency of their repetition. "The punishment," says St. Cyprian, "ought to equal the fault; and the remedy administered to be as severe as the disorder."

The works of satisfaction, that penance requires, are chiefly those, which are enjoined by the priest, and may be reduced to three heads, viz. praying, fasting, and alms-deeds. By prayer I mean all the acts of religion, that depend upon the mind; such as reading books of piety and attending the divine office. Fasting regards the body, and includes deprivations of all sorts; whatever may tend to subdue or to mortify the flesh. Alms comprehend the different ways of assisting and succouring our neighbour, whether corporally or spiritually. The Almighty is, moreover, so indulgent and merciful, as to accept, in the light of satisfaction, whatever afflictions may befall us; as illness, affronts, persecutions, &c. But that they may be meritorious in the sight of God, and available to this purpose, they must be received in a spirit of penance, and united to the sufferings of our Saviour,

Jesus Christ ; through whom alone we can duly satisfy and make atonement for our sins. For it is solely from him that our actions or sufferings can derive any merit : it is he, that presents them to his heavenly Father, by whom they are accepted only in consideration of his Son. Moreover, it is necessary, Theophilus, to make restitution to our neighbour for any mischief, we may have done him ; whether in his person, by ill treatment ; in his honour, by detraction or calumny ; in his property, by theft or any other kind of injury. Nothing else can obtain of God the remission of such sins as these, but a compliance with the above terms ; viz. to be reconciled to our neighbour, if we have used him ill : to make good his reputation, if we have unfortunately hurt it : to restore what we have taken from him, and to compensate the damage, that our conduct may have caused.

I had incurred everlasting torments ; and thou art willing, O God ! to change them into temporal chastisements. It depended on thee to sentence me to a most tremendous punishment ; and thou art pleased to substitute in its place a gentle satisfaction. This mitigation is the fruit of the tortures, thou didst endure. I accept, dear Lord ! all the sufferings, which thy justice may send me for the expiation of my sins. I unite them to the satisfaction, which thou didst offer on Mount Calvary. Deign to apply to my soul the merits of thy death. I will punctually perform the penance, that may be enjoined me by thy servant. I will bear with resignation whatever afflictions thou mayest assign me : considering them so many proofs of thy affectionate love, and persuaded that thou only chastisest me in this life, in order to spare in the life to come. I will even add to them, of my own accord, some farther mortifications, to supply for the defect of what may have been enjoined me in the confessional. Some little denials at my meals, some alms retrenched from my vanity, a diligence in rising early, a punctuality in the discharge of my duties, all these sacrifices, which cannot prejudice my health, will be acceptable to thee ; and, united to thy sufferings, will serve to atone for my sins, and to satisfy thy justice.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should daily offer to God our afflictions, of whatever kind ; and endeavour to bear them in a spirit of penance.



## CHAPTER LXXXIII.

## ON INDULGENCES.

*Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven. Matt. xviii. 18.*

WHAT we understand by an indulgence is the remission of the temporal chastisement, which, as I have already said, is due to sin, after the sin itself is forgiven. An indulgence, therefore, remits neither the crime in question, nor the eternal punishment it merits. It regards the temporal infliction only, which remains to be suffered, notwithstanding that the stain is effaced by the sacrament. It mitigates the rigour of such inflictions, or shortens their duration.

In former days, the discipline of the Church enjoined for certain crimes public penances, which lasted many years. It required the sinner to pray much; to pass his days in tears, and his nights in watchings; to sleep upon the ground; to attire himself in sack-cloth; to fast; to give plentiful alms, and to perform other good works, of a similar tendency. These ancient regulations are no longer in force: but the justice of God is still the same, and the guilt of sin, as deserving of punishment, as in the primitive ages. It is to supply the deficiencies of our works of satisfaction that the Church, ever guided by the Spirit of God, affords us these indulgencies; that is to say, that she remits to her children a part of those penances, to which they must have been subjected by her former institutions. This power Christ imparted to her, in the persons of the Apostles, when he said to them, as above: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." She is possessed, therefore, of a power of inflicting chastisements for the expiation of sin; and she is possessed, likewise of a power of remitting those chastisements, whenever the honour of God and the spiritual welfare of her children may dispose her to use it.

The proof of this assertion, which the words of Christ afford, is moreover confirmed by the constant practice of

antiquity. The most authentic records of history, and at the head of them the sacred writings, give us instances of this. St. Paul made use of this mitigating power, in regard to the Corinthian, who had been convicted of incest. He commanded that the sinner should, for a time, be cut off from the communion of the faithful; and delivered over to Satan, to be punished in body, for the good of his soul. The criminal received this humiliation with such sentiments of repentance, that there were grounds to apprehend the excess of his dejection. Whereupon, the Apostle, in a letter, next year, remitted him the rest of the penance enjoined; and exhorted the people of Corinth to strive to console, and to treat him with charity; adding that, in this, he acted by the power which he held from above: "For what I have pardoned, if I have pardoned any thing, for you sakes have I done it, in the person of Christ."\* The Church had also regard, in the primitive ages, to the recommendations of the martyrs; and, at their intercession, treated such sinners, as they kindly pleaded for, with indulgence and lenity. She likewise shortened the term of the penances imposed, in favour of those, who, after beginning them with vigour, were prevented from going farther, by the appearance of a persecution; in order to animate them to a courageous and steady opposition.

It is through the superabundant merits of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, that she undertakes to acquit her children of what they owe to the Divine justice. It is from this source she draws those graces, which she communicates so liberally. The distribution of that immense treasure, is left to her discretion; and she divides it in the proportion, her wisdom suggests. Sometimes, she allows but a stated number of days or years of indulgence; that is to say, she curtails so much of the duration of the penance, that her pristine discipline exacted. At other times, she grants a plenary indulgence; by which is meant, that she remits to the repenting sinner all he might have to accomplish of the canonical penance. Wherein observe that the intention of the Church is not to exonerate us from doing penance: it is rather to help us in performing it. She grants her indulgences but to those, who strenuously exert themselves to appease the Divine anger. She means to make good their deficiencies, and not to coun-

\* 2 Cor. ii. 10.

tenance tepidity. And the works she proposes, besides atoning for past sins, serve to guard us against relapses, to moderate the passions, to subdue the flesh; and as such are indispensable. By this bountiful dispensation of her tenderness and elemency, the Church endeavours to win us to the service of the Deity; for which reason, she bestows them so freely throughout the year; that, being encouraged by her readiness to assist our exertions, we may more ardently pursue the great work of salvation.

Thy mercies, O God! are above my acknowledgments. Thou hast rescued me from the flames of hell, which my guilt had deserved. Thou hast done away my sins by the sacrament of penance: but still I stand indebted to the claims of thy justice, which demands a satisfaction proportioned to my faults. Alas! what have I wherewith to appease it? All I can offer is too insignificant to expiate my crimes: but thou comest again to my assistance, and suppliest graciously by indulgences what is wanting to my penance. From the inexhaustible treasury of thy merits the Church draws those riches, that must acquit me in thy sight. What thanks do I not owe thee for so many favours! It would be abusing them, to think of being exempted from the works of satisfaction, because thou deignest to discharge my debts. Can I then wish to do nothing for thy sake, because thou dost every thing for mine? Can I be so ungenerous as to desire my salvation on such easy terms, when it has cost thee so dearly? No, it is not just that the innocent should suffer alone, and the criminal be spared. I am willing to suffer with thee, dear Lord! All I request is, that thou wouldst vouchsafe to apply to me the merits of thy sufferings, to compensate the deficiencies and imperfections of mine.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should embrace every opportunity of gaining indulgences.

## CHAPTER LXXXIV.

## ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST.

*The bread, that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the World.—My flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed.* John vi. 52, 56.

THE Eucharist is a sacrament, which truly and really contains, according to the tenets of our faith, the body and blood, the soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, under the species and appearances of bread and wine. As such, it is the greatest and the most august of all the sacraments. For while the others confer grace only, this puts us in possession of the author of grace, God himself. By means of the Eucharist, the Saviour of the world resides personally in us, and we in him.

Long before its institution, Christ had promised it to his Apostles. This promise we find recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John, when, after saying to the Jews; "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven," he added; "The bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world:" and as the Jews seemed diffident, and inclined to cavil at what he said, he subjoined with greater energy; "Amen, amen, I say unto you: except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.—He, that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him."\* The same promise he fulfilled, the night previous to his passion, at the awful scene of his last supper; when, having taken the bread and given thanks, he broke and gave it to his disciples, saying; "Take ye and eat; this is my body:" and with the chalice, "Drink ye all of this," he said; "for this is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins."†—"Do this for a commemoration of me."‡

The species of bread and wine, which we see, and which we taste, are the visible signs, that express the invisible effects of this life-giving sacrament. They intimate that the body and blood of Christ are the nourishment of our souls,

\* John vi. 51—57.

† Math. xxvi. 26—28.

‡ Luke xxii. 19.

as bread and wine are the sustenance of our bodies. But notwithstanding that these appearances, such as the colour and the taste, remain unaltered, after the words of consecration neither bread nor wine is left: for the whole substance of the bread is changed into the body, and the whole substance of the wine into the blood of Jesus Christ. Insomuch that, from that moment, it is the same body, as was nailed to the cross and now resides in heaven. And as it is a living and animated body, it follows that Christ is wholly and entirely under each of the species, and wholly and entirely under each particle of the said species. Under the species of bread, the body of Christ is united to his blood, to his soul, and to his divinity: and under the species of wine, his blood, in like manner, is united to his body, to his soul, and to his godhead. For as Jesus Christ is now immortal, he can no longer be divided.

This change is effected by the ineffable operation of the words of our Redeemer, which the priest pronounces in his name, and in his person. It is God himself, that works the miracle, by the organ of his minister. It is he, who once changed water into wine, at the nuptial feast of Cana: it is he, who produced out of nothing whatever has existence. It is surely as easy for him, to transmute one substance into another, as to create, by his sole word, the whole universe and its contents. We do not conceive, it is true, how the miracle is performed; but we know that *with God nothing is impossible*; and we believe it, on the respectable authority of his Son, the effects of whose love for us, exceed our comprehension. The Deity, no doubt, is able to operate this wonder, because he is omnipotent; and he does it in fact, because he informs us so himself. We bow submissively to what he asserts, without vainly reasoning on a matter superior to reason; and without investigating the laws of nature, where nature is not concerned. Believe, then, my dear Theophilus, believe, on the word of God, that he is truly present in the Eucharist. Believe, in defiance of your senses, that neither bread nor wine remains, after the consecration pronounced over them. When the Deity vouchsafes to speak, we are not to listen to our senses. Nothing is difficult to an infinite power. Our Saviour, to unite us intimately to himself, has condescended to become our food. He has commanded us to drink his blood, so plentifully shed for us; and to eat of the victim, that was immolated on the cross. And, to pro-

cure us this happiness, he has been prodigal, so to speak, of his miraculous exertions.

How stupendous are thy works, O God! Is it credible thou shouldst deign to live with us, and to become our spiritual food? Formerly, thou gavest to thy people a celestial nourishment, and feddest them, in the desert, with the strengthening bread of angels. At present, thou dost far greater things for us. It is no longer that manna, which was showered from the heavens; it is thy body, thy blood, thy divinity itself, which thou impartest to us freely. O prodigy of love, which thou alone couldst effect, and which the comprehension of man is unable to fathom! But thou hast affirmed it, who art the infallible truth, and I desire no other assurance. I believe in thy word. I pierce the clouds, that envelop thee, and recognise my God. I see in this mystery the effects of an astonishing, of a godlike charity. How expressive the means thou hast chosen, to unite thyself to me, and me to thyself! How admirably do they accord with the excess of thy love; that love, which induced thee to vest thyself with our nature, and to give thy life for us! More tender than a mother, thou feedest them with the nutriment of thy own sacred body and blood. May I correspond with thy affection, by a zealous eagerness to receive thee. May I run to thy table, with the like avidity as a child, to the breast of her, that suckles him. And may it be my only affliction to be deprived of the pleasure of thy heavenly banquet.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should adore Jesus Christ, really present on our altars.

## CHAPTER LXXXV.

ON THE DISPOSITIONS REQUIRED FOR RECEIVING THE HOLY  
EUCHARIST.

*The work is great; for a house is prepared, not for man, but for God.* 1 Paralip. xxix. 1.

THE intimate union produced by the Eucharist, between God and us, demands, of course, the most attentive preparation. The more holy the sacrament, the greater care should we take to fit ourselves for it. Of the dispositions, thereto required, some regard the soul and others the body.

The first disposition, which relates to the soul, is purity of conscience. We must try ourselves, as the Apostle commands, before we venture to approach to this heavenly table; and, if conscious of any mortal sin, must, of necessity, have recourse to the tribunal of penance. The Eucharist presupposes a spiritual life in those, that come to receive it. None, but the living, can be benefited by aliment. It is the God of purity, that here communicates himself to us; and a pure heart alone can be acceptable to him. To signify this to them, Christ would wash his disciples feet, when he deigned first to feed them with his own sacred body and blood. And to impress the same idea, the deacon, in former days, was wont audibly to pronounce, before the celebration of the mysteries: "Holy things are for the holy." The innocence of baptism, either preserved entire, or recovered by penance, is that nuptial garment, without which we are forbidden to appear at the feast of the great Father of nature.

This purity of conscience is, then, the principal condition: but with it must be joined a lively faith, a firm hope, and an ardent charity. Christ himself calls the Eucharist a sacrament of faith: and whoever approaches it, must believe, without hesitation, that, in receiving it, he receives Jesus Christ; the same Jesus Christ, as lived in this world, as died for our redemption, as rose triumphant from the dead, and now sits in heaven, at the right hand of his Father. A firm hope consists in expecting confidently from Christ whatever we may ask of him, relative to salvation. And, since he here gives

us himself, what else can he refuse us? He has declared that "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day."\* After so generous a promise, how great should be our reliance on his unquestionable liberality! Go, then, Theophilus, to the banquet of your Saviour, with the like sentiments of confidence, as the woman in the Gospel; "If I shall touch only his garment," she said, "I shall be healed;"† which, in fact, she was immediately. I need not, I think, prove that love should be your guide, to conduct you to the altar. The Eucharist is a sacrament of love: the institution of it is an effect of an incomprehensible love. Would it not, therefore, be a most base ingratitude to receive it with a heart benumbed with indifference?

But this love must be accompanied with profound sentiments of humility, adoration and gratitude. Whom do we receive in the mysterious feast of the altar? God himself, the Creator and Sovereign Lord of the universe; whose virtues are infinite, whose perfections unbounded. And what are we? Nothingness and sin. Let us then humble ourselves before the Deity; and, with the Centurion, acknowledge that we are not worthy to approach him. Prostrate at his feet, let us adore him with fear and trembling: for though veiled under the eucharistic species, he is no less our God. Let us rouse ourselves to a sense of gratitude, with all the ardour of our soul. If this should be commensurate to the magnitude of the favour, how animated ought ours to be, for a gift of infinite value!

Moreover, the body must contribute its share to receive properly the divine guest, who comes to honour it with his presence. For this, two things are necessary. First, we must be fasting, from at least the midnight beforehand. This is an ancient ordinance of the Church, out of reverence to the sacrament; from which those alone are exempted, who, in a dangerous illness, receive it by way of *viaticum*. Secondly, we must be on our knees, with the greatest possible modesty and respectfulness of behaviour. This posture of the body, and a due gravity of deportment bespeak the feelings of a soul, that humbles itself profoundly in the presence of the Supreme Majesty.

O amiable Saviour! I firmly believe that thou art truly

\* St. John vi. 55.

† Math. ix. 21.



present in the Eucharist, and that when we receive it, we receive thee thyself. I adore thee under the sacred species, as my Lord and my God. No, "I am not worthy thou shouldst enter under my roof." But thou commandest me to receive thee, and I obey with awful confidence. I have presented myself to thy minister, and laid my sins at his feet. My faults are therefore effaced, by the sentence of absolution.

But prepare me still farther. Sanctify this habitation, in which thou condescendest to dwell, and adorn it with all virtues. I look for every thing from thy mercy; for what canst thou deny me, after giving me thyself? Yes, my God, I trust that thou wilt cure all my maladies, and attach me to thyself for ever. How much ought I to love thee for so inconceivable a blessing! Can I offer to partake of it, without being melted into tenderness? Enkindle in my heart the divine flames of thy charity. This heart is all I can present to thee, in testimony of my gratitude. I desire to consecrate it to thy love, O God! and entreat thee to accept it. The sentiments, that now actuate me are the effects of thy kindness, and are inspired by thyself. Preserve them in their vigour, and never suffer them to be impaired.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should prepare ourselves for communion by fervent and repeated acts of faith, hope and charity.

---

## CHAPTER LXXXVI.

### OF THE EFFECTS OF THE BLESSED EUCHARIST.

*He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* John vi. 55.

ADMIRABLE, Theophilus, are the effects, which the Eucharist produces, when properly received.

The first of these effects is intimately to unite us, and even to incorporate us with Jesus Christ. Weigh well the import

and the force of what I say. We may be united to Christ by faith; by believing firmly whatever he teaches. We may be united to him by charity; by loving him with all our heart. Faith captivates our understanding, and charity our affections to him. But there is a union still more perfect; viz. that, which is produced by a participation of his body and blood: and this most intimate connexion is peculiar to the Eucharist. What therefore is the result of our being so happy as to receive it? Jesus Christ communicates himself entirely to us: he unites us to himself so closely, that we become the same body and soul with him. O wonderful effect of this adorable sacrament! Should we have imagined ourselves capable of a union so divine? But Christ himself asserts it, in the following words: "He that eateth my flesh; and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him."\* As the food, which we take, commixes with our bodies, and is transmuted into our substance; so, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, our body becomes that of Christ. For there is this distinctive difference, that our ordinary nourishment is changed into us: whereas, the holy communion transforms us into Jesus Christ. Whence St. Paul; "and live not I; but Christ liveth in me.†"

The second effect of the Eucharist is to increase, to strengthen, and to preserve our spiritual life. Our Saviour, become the food of our souls, does not remain inactive in them. He gives fresh vigour to his grace: he confirms us in his love, and enables us to preserve that precious treasure with a constant fidelity. Hence that settled and steady virtue, which we admire in those, who communicate worthily. Do you wish to know what supports such a one in that exemplary piety, which edifies all, who see him; in that regularity of conduct, which makes him a model of imitation? It is his frequent participation of the sacred bread of life.

A third effect of this sacrament is to weaken the force of concupiscence, and to moderate our passions. We all bring with us into the world a strong propensity to evil. This, like a poison, has spread itself through the whole mass of human nature, by the sin of our first parents. The Eucharist does not entirely free us from the virulence of its infection. But it tempers its malignancy; and, on this account is styled an antidote, in the language of the ancient fathers.

\* John vi. 57.

† Gal. ii. 21.

**This you will experience, my dear Theophilus, if you come to it with a heart, duly prepared to receive it. You will find your own strength increase, and that of your enemy diminish: your temptations will neither be so frequent in their importunities, nor so violent in their assaults. Resist, therefore, courageously; never suffer yourself to grow tired; and the grace of the Eucharist will conquer your passions.**

A fourth effect of this divine banquet is to give us a pledge of a happy eternity and a glorious resurrection. This consoling assurance we have from the mouth of Christ: "He, that eateth my flesh," he says, "and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." The life, imparted to the soul by virtue of the Eucharist, is the commencement, and, as it were, a foretaste of the joys of futurity. And this life will continue in us for ever, unless we wilfully destroy it. The vivifying flesh of Jesus Christ acts also upon our bodies. It remains in them, as the seed of a blissful immortality, that will raise them, in time, from the corruption of the grave, and invest them with the qualities reserved for a state of glory. "Yes," says St. Ireneus, "since our Redeemer is in us, by the communication of his flesh, we shall surely rise again." The presence of his sacred body is an indubitable earnest of our future resurrection to a life of endless happiness.

Divine Jesus! thou communicatest thyself to man but to crown him with blessings. How happy am I to have such advantages within my reach! I may then unite myself to thee so closely, as to become the same person with thee, to live by thy life, to breathe by thy spirit. Alas, O Lord! I groan under the pressure of a miserable body, weighed down with infirmities: but thou wilt sanctify it by thy presence. A perverse inclination bends me continually to evil: but thy divine flesh will weaken my passions, and empower me to subdue them. As the reward of my victory, thou dost promise me eternal life, and give me a pledge of it in the banquet of the Eucharist. My body, united to thine, shall arise from the tomb incorruptible and glorious. Come, then, O my God, to me; or command me to go to thee. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced, in the hopes of this happy union. For what have I in heaven, or what can I desire on earth, but thee, my God! the God of my affections, and my portion for ever!

*The Practical Inference.*

That, after communion, we should pray Christ to impart to us the wonderful effects of this life-giving sacrament.

---

## CHAPTER LXXXVII.

## ON AN UNWORTHY COMMUNION.

*You cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils.* 1 Cor. x. 21.

THEY, who communicate in mortal sin, receive truly, as well as others, the body and blood of Jesus Christ. But they receive not the graces, that are attached to this sacrament. On the contrary, they eat and drink their own judgment, and self-caused damnation. Such is the expression of St. Paul on this terrible subject. "Whoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, (that is, in a state of sin,) shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man, prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself; not discerning the body of the Lord."\*

These words inform us how great is the crime of an unworthy communion, and how dreadful its consequences. This crime is the most atrocious of all possible sacrileges: a profanation of whatever is most august in the sacraments, most holy in religion. Other sins are chiefly injurious to man: but this, with a bold effrontery, attacks the Deity in person. It profanes, in a manner the most outrageous, the humanity and divinity of the Son of God himself. It unites, as much as it can, this God of all holiness with vice and iniquity, by introducing his adorable blood into veins flowing with sin. It is a treason similar, in perfidy, to that of the miserable Judas. Like him, the unworthy communicant betrays his divine master into the hands of his most bitter

\* 1. Cor. 27—29.

enemies. Like him, after being favoured with every mark of his affection, he violates the sacred ties of friendship and gratitude. He crucifies him anew: he makes him the laughing-stock of his passions; and tramples under foot, according to the words of the same Apostle, the blood of the new covenant.

And what are the consequences of a crime so enormous? I have already told you in general terms. "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself." Ponder with attention, Theophilus, the sense of that expression. He, that profanes this sacrament, eats and drinks the sentence, that dooms him to reprobation. He incorporates it with his person, and renders it in some sort, irreversible and final. The food we take is inseparable from our substance: it is changed into us: it becomes the same thing as ourselves; so that it cannot be disjoined from us. In like manner, the unworthy receiver has swallowed his own judgment: he has, so to speak, changed it into his habit. His condemnation is no longer written only on paper, or engraved on marble flags: it is traced on his own heart; it circulates with his blood; it attends him wherever he goes. O dreadful punishment, which can only be inflicted by the hand of an avenging God!

Hence, it generally happens that they, who are guilty of this crime, fall into a hardness of heart, and a blindness of understanding, which, imperceptibly almost, conduct them to final impenitence. Of this we have a frightful instance in the perfidious Judas. Scarcely has he received the divine donation of his Redeemer, than his mind is obscured, and his heart becomes callous. Nothing can stop him. He rises hastily from table, and consummates his crime. But where does his sacrilege terminate? In despair, in death, in everlasting reprobation. However, do not hence conclude, my child, that the person, who has been so unfortunate, as to make a bad communion, ought forthwith to despond, and to give up his salvation. He has yet a resource left him: the mercy of God is infinite; and if he addresses himself to it with a contrite and humble heart, he will not be rejected. That precious blood, which he has so outrageously profaned, is still able to purify him. But the inference, you ought to draw from the above reflections, is, that the forgiveness of this crime is not to be obtained without very great difficulty; that it is but seldom the unworthy communicant returns

fully to himself; and that you should take every precaution to avoid a guilt so foul, a misfortune so deplorable.

I perceive, O God! the enormity of an unworthy communion. To repeat the horrors of thy crucifixion, to profane thy adorable body, to trample on thy sacred blood, to renew the treason of Judas and the savage barbarity of thy enemies; my soul shrinks at these ideas, and stands appalled with dread and terror. Is there then a Christian, one that makes profession of belonging to thee, who can be capable of such atrocity? Can I myself be so abandoned as to think of committing it? Alas, dear Lord! preserve me from so dreadful an evil. I am not surprised at the severity of the punishment, that attends it. To eat and drink one's own damnation, how tremendous the thought! I cannot reflect upon it, without being penetrated with horror. Stop, O God! stop all, that presume to receive thee unworthily. May an invisible force prevent them from approaching thy holy altar. Inspire me with a most profound respect for the divine banquet of the Eucharist. Clothe me with that nuptial garment, which it is necessary to bring to it, and without which we merit justly to be cast into exterior darkness. Prepare thyself my heart for thee, by cleansing it from all defilements: and suffer me not to meet my death in the very source of life itself. To avoid this misfortune, I will not venture to judge myself; for I should run too great a risk of being deluded and imposed on. I will have recourse to my director: I will conceal nothing from him: I will submit to his decision, and confidently follow it.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That, in regard to communion, we should abide by the advice of a prudent confessor.

## CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

## ON FREQUENT COMMUNION.

*He hath filled the hungry with good things.* Luke i. 53.

THE Apostle, after painting in the strongest colours the enormous guilt of a bad communion, draws not this inference from it; Wherefore, keep at a distance from the sacred table: but he says; "Let a man prove himself; and then eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice."

The apprehension, therefore, of receiving unworthily ought not to deter you, Theophilus, from the use of the communion. It ought only to engage you to examine seriously your dispositions, and to redouble your vigilance, that you may be worthy to approach it often. To communicate in a state of sin is certainly a great evil; but not to communicate at all is likewise another rock; and either of them assuredly leads to everlasting death.

The Eucharist is necessary to maintain us in the spiritual life of grace. The strength and spirits of the soul are exhausted by degrees, as well as those of the body, unless carefully attended to. The resource, left us by our Saviour to recruit this spiritual energy, is the table of the Eucharist. "Except you eat," he himself says, "the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you."\* He instituted this sacrament under the species of bread and wine, to give us to understand that we ought frequently to receive it. This mysterious bread should be the usual aliment of our souls, as common bread and wine are the ordinary sustenance of our bodies. In the beginning of Christianity, the faithful judged wisely in regard to this matter. They considered the holy Eucharist as the daily bread of God's children; and, in fact, partook of it every day, solely dreading to be deprived of it. Strive to adopt their sentiments, and to imitate their fervour.

Say not that frequent communion was customary, in those days; but that the discipline of the Church is in that respect altered. I freely confess that Christians are no longer what they were, and that the ardour of charity is cooled beyond

\* John vi.

conception. But the spirit of the Church is the same; and of this I will give you a proof from the Council of Trent, not very remote from us. "The Council could wish," it says, "that the faithful, as often as they assist at the sacrifice of the mass, would participate, not only spiritually, but also actually, in the distribution of the holy Eucharist." The Council of Rheims, held almost in our own days, expresses the like desire in terms still more declaratory. "We see with regret," it says, "that there are those, who are so negligent, as to communicate once a year only. For which reason we enjoin all curates, and such as are entrusted with the ministry of the word, to instruct the faithful duly on frequent communion, which formerly was in use, and on the wonderful fruits, it produced in those times; and forcibly to inculcate to them that nothing is more likely to renew the happy days of the primitive Church, than a frequent participation of the bread of life."

You hear in these words the opinion of the Church; and you see that, although she in rigour, exacts of her children to communicate but once a year, it is not because she thinks this annual communion sufficient. She is unwilling to use menaces, to induce them to do it oftener; for fear of augmenting transgressions and multiplying sacrileges. But it is her wish they should be so pure, so irreprehensible in their way of living, as to communicate frequently; as frequently, as may be necessary to support, by the grace of the Eucharist, the life and vigour of their souls. If you love your God, you will often unite yourself to him. He invites you to this sacred banquet: despise not his kindness. If you love your mother, the Church, you will not slight at her commands: you will fulfil her intentions, and accomplish her desires. If you have your salvation at heart, you will frequently have recourse to the table of the Eucharist, as the most powerful of all means to effect what you aspire to.

Thou dost invite us, O God! to this banquet, in which thou feedest us with thyself. Thou desirest often to see thy children surrounding thy altar. It is thy delight to dwell in them, and to enrich them with thy gifts. But they reject thy invitations. Thou callest them, and they fly from thee, deaf both to thy voice and to that of thy Church. Is it fear, that is the cause of this unaccountable perverseness? It is true thou requirest they should be properly disposed, when they present themselves before thee. But thy grace is fully equal to



supply them with what they want. If they are afraid of communicating unworthily, they should not be less apprehensive of neglecting to receive thee, and of perishing for want of sustenance. Alas! it is not fear, O Lord! that restrains me; it is the coolness of my love. If I love thee, as I ought, I should easily renounce whatever renders me unworthy. If I love thee, as I ought, I should spare no pains to fit myself to come to thee frequently. Give me this divine love, then; and nothing farther will prevent me from attending thy table. Enkindle it in my bosom; and my soul will pant after thee, as the stag after the living and refreshing waters of the stream. My greatest consolation will then be to receive thee into my breast: my greatest misery to be secluded from the participation of that happiness.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should consider the holy communion as indispensable to our welfare.

---

## CHAPTER LXXXIX.

### ON THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

*From the rising of the sun, even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles; and, in every place, there is sacrifice and there is offered to my name a clean oblation. Malac. i. 11.*

THE Eucharist is not only a sacrament, in which Christ imparts himself to us, to be the food of our souls: it is also a sacrifice, in which he presents himself to his Father, as the victim of our reconciliation. And for this purpose, he was not satisfied with offering himself once on the altar of the cross: but desirous, moreover, to leave us a sacrifice, that might perpetuate, to the end of time, the remembrance of that first oblation, and apply its merits to us, at his last supper, the very night on which he was betrayed, he presented to God, the Father, his body and his blood, under the species of

bread and wine: he gave them to his Apostles, whom he then appointed the priests of the covenant; and by these words, "Do ye this in remembrance of me," he commanded them and their successors, to offer them in like manner. This the Catholic Church has uniformly taught and universally practised.

This sacrifice is then the same as the sacrifice of the cross, of which it is a daily continuation. Christ is present on the altar under the appearance of a victim, under the semblance of death. Though alive and glorious, he there appears to be immolated; inasmuch as, by the words of consecration, his body seems separated and disjoined from his blood. And this disunion of the species is a lively representation of that violent death, which he suffered in our behalf. Thus, it is the same victim and the same offerer on the altar, as on the cross. The sole difference is in the manner. On the cross, he was his own offerer; whereas, in the mass, he is offered by the ministry of his priests; on the cross, his sacrifice was stained with blood; in the mass it is untinged and perfectly spotless.

Such is the august sacrifice of our religion; a sacrifice worthy of the promised covenant; and which unites in itself, in fact, all the advantages the ancient sacrifices, so numerous and different, represented only in figure. It is, at once, a sacrifice of Adoration, by which we acknowledge the authority and sovereign dominion of the Deity; a sacrifice of Thanksgiving, by which we praise him for his mercies; a sacrifice of Impetration, by which we obtain additional favours of him, and a sacrifice of Propitiation, by which we appease his anger and deprecate his justice. It cannot be doubted but the oblation, which Christ makes of himself to his Father, is the most sublime act of homage, that can be rendered to his infinite Majesty; and disposes him to regard us with an eye of clemency and indulgence; in exhibiting to him the cruel death, to which his beloved son was pleased to submit for the reconciliation of sinners.

Instructed, as you are, Theophilus, on the mystery of the blessed Eucharist; convinced that Jesus Christ is really present on the altar, and that he there renews and perpetuates the memory of his passion, with what devotion and gratitude should you not assist at this grand sacrifice! Had you been present at his death and immolation on mount Calvary, what would have been your sentiments? Would you not have been penetrated with grief, with com-

punction and with love at so affecting a sight? But since the sacrifice of the mass is the same as that of the cross, you ought to experience the like feelings. You should be careful to join with the priest, and to unite your intentions to his. He offers up this sacrifice with a view to render to the Deity that tribute of adoration, which is due to him alone; to return him thanks for favours received, to solicit the addition of such as may be still farther necessary, and to implore the forgiveness and remission of all sin.

And, observe, my child, that sacrifice is offered only to the Supreme Being; because it is a testimony of our submission and dependence upon him. We but commemorate the saints, in order to thank the Almighty for the laurels, which his grace has enabled them to gain; for the glory, with which he has crowned them, and to beg them to join their prayers with ours, for the attainment of our wishes. This sacrifice is offered not only for the living, who are still amenable to the divine bar; but also for the dead, who have already completed their mortal race: for such, I say, among them as have died in a state of grace, but yet have to atone for the remains of past transgressions. For these the Church begs, through the merits of this sacrifice, the diminution of their sufferings and their admittance into heaven. Which custom of offering the holy victim in behalf of the faithful departed is of primitive antiquity and apostolic tradition.

To have sacrificed thy life for us on the tree of the cross was inadequate, O God! to the extent of thy love. Thou wouldst also have this sacrifice to be daily renewed among us, that we might participate in its merits. Can my heart be equal to the various sentiments, which a gift so ineffable, a sacrifice so holy, so excellent and so efficacious demands of its feelings? I will correspond with thy affection, and fit myself for the blessings, which thou there dispensest to thy servants. I will assist at the mass as often, and with as much devotion, as I can. On entering thy sanctuary, I will look upon the altar as another mount Calvary. I will there keep myself in a posture, expressive of my respect; sedulously avoiding whatever may distract me, or turn my attention from the sanctity of the mysteries. I will unite my intentions with those of thy minister, viz. to adore thy Sovereign Majesty, to thank thee for past favours, to supplicate thy farther aid and to satisfy thy justice. At the elevation, I will make acts of faith, of hope and of adoration. At the com-

munion, I will aspire after thee; I will long to be united to thee; and will form the resolution to get myself in readiness to receive thee, as soon as possible.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should attend the holy sacrifice in the sincerest sentiments of piety.

## CHAPTER XC.

### ON THE SACRAMENT OF EXTREME-UNCTION.

*Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man; and the Lord shall raise him up: and, if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.*  
James v. 14, 15.

THE infinite goodness of our God has not only supplied us with every salutary aid through the course of life, and under the enjoyment of health; it has, moreover, instituted a sacrament, to console us in the time of illness, and particularly at the hour of death, when our enemy is the most busy, and temptation the most dangerous. The sacrament is called *Extreme-unction*; inasmuch, as it is the last sacred unction, the Christian receives. The first of these is given us at baptism; the second, at confirmation; and this final one, at the approach of death.

Christ established this sacrament as well for the corporal, as for the spiritual relief of the sick. And the advantages, attending it, St. James explains at large, in the terms above recited: "Is any man sick?" &c. From which words it appears that two things are essential to the nature of this sacrament, viz. unction and prayer. The unction is performed with oil of olives, which is consecrated for this purpose by the bishop, on Maunday Thursday. And this holy oil is applied to each of the principal organs of the senses, to

purify it from the sins, of which it may have been occasionally the instrument. The prayer, that accompanies this unction, is this; "May the Lord, by this sacred unction and the effect of his most tender mercy, forgive thee whatever sins, thou hast committed by thy sight;" and so as to all the other senses. A powerful and efficacious prayer; which our Redeemer has promised, by the mouth of his Apostle, that he will at all times attend to.

There are three principal effects peculiar to this sacrament; the first of which is to give strength to the sick against the temptations of the devil and the horrors of death. By confirming their faith and their confidence in God, it fortifies their mind against the assaults of their potent adversary: and by inflaming their desire and hope of possessing God, it animates them against the terrors of death and the dread of dissolution. The more ardent this desire, and the firmer the hope, the less, in proportion, is the apprehension of dying.

The second effect of extreme-unction, is to do away the remains of sin, and the sins themselves, if any remain to be expiated. For which reason, by the fathers in the Church, it is frequently styled the perfection or the complement of penance. By the remains of sin, I mean a weakness and languor, that adhere to the soul after the pardon of the sin itself, by which it is still attached to the things of the earth, with little relish for those of heaven. This spiritual faintness, as I may call it, is removed by extreme-unction, which disengages us from the world, and elevates us to higher prospects. It also remits our venial, and even such of our mortal sins, as we may have accidentally overlooked, or may, at that time, be unable to confess: provided, however, that we be truly and sincerely sorry for them. But we ought previously, if possible, to have recourse to confession; for extreme-unction is a sacrament of the living, and, of consequence, should be received in a state of grace.

Finally, the last effect of extreme-unction, is to restore health to the body, if expedient to salvation. A person should not wait, therefore, till he be brought to the verge of death. It is not a time to pray for health, when ready to breathe the expiring gasp. It would be tempting God so to do; because a miracle alone could, in that case, re-establish us. To receive extreme-unction, it is sufficient to be dangerously ill; and, such as demand it, while their judgment is yet sound and their faculties unimpaired, will both be better

disposed for it and reap greater benefit. Besides, by deferring it to the last moment, one runs no small risk of dying without it: for it too often happens that they, who thus delay and procrastinate, are prevented by death from enjoying this last comfort. And although this sacrament be not of absolute necessity, yet it is incumbent to receive it, when circumstances permit. It is the ordinary channel, through which to obtain the grace of a good and pious death. To neglect it is to disobey the orders of Christ: it is voluntarily depriving ourselves of the advantages annexed to it, and incurring the danger of that greatest of all misfortunes, the unhappiness of dying ill.

I return thee thanks, O my God! for having prepared for us, by the sacrament of extreme-unction, the most effectual succours for that critical moment, which must decide our eternity. The enemy of our salvation, then redoubles his efforts: but thou also redoublest thy benevolent assistance, in proportion to the peril. Thou dost strengthen us against his fierce attacks at the approach of dissolution. How kind art thou, O Lord! to take so much care of us, and to furnish us with arms at the most hazardous crisis, that befalls us on earth! Thou displayest thy mercy, at the very time when we appear to be given over to thy justice. Let me not be deprived of this consolatory sacrament at the hour of my departure. I will neglect none of the means, thy paternal goodness has provided; but will strive to merit this favour by a truly Christian life. I entreat thee, even now, to grant me in those moments that spirit of compunction, which ought to accompany this holy rite. Let me not appear in thy presence, till I shall have done my best to prepare myself suitably; that, dying in thy embraces, I may live with thee for ever.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should resolve to call for the sacraments betimes,  
when under the visitation of sickness.

## CHAPTER XCI.

## ON THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY-ORDER.

*The Holy Ghost said to them: Separate me Saul and Barnabas, for the work,—whereunto I have taken them. Then they, fasting and praying and imposing their hands on them, sent them away. Acts xiii. 2, 3.*

THE five foregoing sacraments are common to all Christians; and all ought to receive them, whenever the aid, afforded by them, becomes essential to their well-being. The two following are peculiar to two particular states of life, which, on account of their importance, and the obligations attending them, need a more powerful assistance.

The sacrament of Order supplies the Church with ministers for her direction and government. Imposition of hands and the efficacy of prayer are the means made use of to confer this distinction on them. By the union of these means, they are separated, as I may say, from the rest of the faithful, and vested with the authority of preaching the Gospel, of administering the sacraments, of offering the holy victim, and, to include all in one word, of serving the altar. This sacrament Christ instituted, when he said to his Apostles; "as the Father hath sent me, I also send you.—Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."\* And again, when, after establishing the sacrifice of his body and blood, he subjoined, "Do ye this in remembrance of me." Holy-order is, therefore, a sacrament, which gives the power to perform the ecclesiastical functions, and the grace to perform them well. Neither did the Apostles receive this divine power merely for themselves. They were to impart it to others; and, in consequence thereof, we see them in the Scripture, ordaining bishops, priests, and deacons, by the imposition of hands: and we read in the annals of the primitive Church, that the bishops, constituted by the Apostles, ordained others, in like manner; and this

\* John xx. 21, 23.

succession, which never has been interrupted, will perpetuate the sacred hierarchy till the expiration of time.

Although there be a diversity of degrees, yet there is but one sacrament of holy-order, which is that of the priesthood; and which is more or less communicated, according to the rank and elevation of each particular minister. The tonsure, which gives admission to the ecclesiastical state, is not an order; it is but a ceremony, that precedes and disposes for the orders that follow. The person, thus selected, declares that he takes God for his portion, and that he devotes himself to his service, and to that of his Church. A state of life so pure, requires extraordinary endowments in such, as are candidates for it. The first of which is to be called; and not to thrust one's self into it. If there be no state, in embracing which, we are not previously obliged to consult the will of God, how much more necessary is this precaution in one, where the duties are so holy, the functions so sublime. "Neither doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God."\* Jesus Christ chose his Apostles; they did not obtrude themselves upon him. "You have not chosen me," he says to them, "but I have chosen you."† And so convinced were they of the necessity of this divine vocation, that they addressed themselves to heaven, to be thence informed whom it destined to replace the treacherous Judas. "Thou, O Lord! who knowest the hearts of all men, show which of these two thou hast chosen."‡

But you will say, perhaps, Theophilus; how shall I know whether God calls me, or not, to the ecclesiastical state? You will know it, if you frequently entreat the Almighty to show you the way, he would have you to take; if you apply to some discreet and intelligent person, to whom you can freely unbosom yourself, and whose advice you can cordially and submissively follow. Another disposition to enter into this holy state, is to be animated with zeal for the honour of God, and the salvation of our neighbour. But woe to such, as intrude themselves into the sacred ministry, with no other views, than those of interest or ambition; views utterly repugnant to the sanctity of their profession, and to the humility of their Master. Again, they that aspire to holy-orders, should be irreproachable as to their morals: fortunate, if still in possession of their baptismal innocence; but, at least,

\*—Hab. v. 1.

† John xv. 16.

‡ Acts i. 24.



this ought long before to be recovered, and their lives, at the time, to be blameless and exemplary. Lastly, a state of grace is requisite in whoever presents himself for the ordination of the Church. To receive a sacrament so pure, under the guilt of mortal sin, would be a most atrocious crime, a most horrible sacrilege.

Happy, O God! is the man, whom thou hast graciously selected for the service of thy altar! He shall dwell in thy tabernacles, under the cover of thy wings. He shall be preserved from the contagion of an infected world; and thou wilt bless him with the plenitude of thy celestial benedictions. But these advantages are reserved for those only, whom thou callest to this dignity. Wo, therefore, to him, who shall intrude himself: wo to him, who shall embrace this state on motives temporal and human. Such a one will not find therein that grace, which is so absolutely necessary to the discharge of the sacred functions; he will meet with nothing but snares and dangers, that will involve him in eternal ruin. O my God! discover thy intentions to me. My destiny is in thy hands. It belongs to thee alone to dispose of me, and to mark out my station. My heart is ready to obey thee: if thou wishest me to enter into the ecclesiastical state, give me the requisite virtues, and render me worthy of thy choice: if otherwise; permit me not, O Lord! to be so presumptuously rash, as to embrace it against thy will: nor let any human consideration determine me to a step, which thy wisdom prohibits: for thou art to be obeyed, in preference to man.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should consult a prudent director on the choice of a state of life.

## CHAPTER XCH.

## ON THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY.

*This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the Church.* Ephes. v. 32.

THE institution of Matrimony is coeval with the world; for, immediately on man's creation, God brought to him the woman, whom he had formed out of one of his ribs, for a friendly associate; and, by a particular blessing, endued them with fruitfulness. And, to render this union more respectable and holy, Christ raised it, in the new law, to the dignity of a sacrament; by annexing to it a peculiar grace, to sanctify such as engage in it, and to aid them in the discharge of its weighty obligations. He has made it the symbol of a venerable mystery; his intimate and everlasting union with his spouse, the Church. Hence, matrimony is become a source of spiritual advantages, when embraced with the dispositions, which its dignity requires. Thus speaks the Council of Trent, upon the authority of the Scripture. "Christian matrimony being more excellent than that of the Jewish law, on account of the grace which it confers, through Jesus Christ, with reason, has it ever been the doctrine of the fathers, of the councils and of universal tradition, that it should be ranked among the sacraments of the covenant of grace." Matrimony, therefore, is a sacrament, which legitimates and sanctifies the commerce between the sexes. It is certain that those who marry, after consulting the will of Heaven, and with views becoming Christians, receive, through this holy rite, that support of heavenly grace, which enables them to fulfil the obligations of the state.

There are three principal dispositions required for this sacrament. The first of these is a pure conscience and a total exemption from mortal sin; for, being again a sacrament of the living, it previously supposes in such, as wish to partake of it, a spiritual life of grace. The Council of Trent even exhorts them to repair beforehand to the sacred table; thence to draw the blessing of God on themselves and their undertaking. A second disposition is to be actuated by a desire of doing the will of God, and of serving him in this

state. It is a principle, we should never lose sight of, that our intention, in all our actions, even the most common and ordinary, should be directed to please the Deity. With how much more reason should this intention influence us in an engagement for life! "We are the children of the saints," said the younger Toby to his wife; "and we must not be joined together like heathens, who know not God."\* Remember, then, Theophilus, that whoever thinks himself called to the state of Christian wedlock, should have no other view in embracing it, than that of sanctifying himself in it and of discharging its duties. Finally, the last disposition requisite is to receive this sacrament with decency, with modesty, and with other suitable virtues; carefully avoiding whatever may offend against the rules of decorum. To receive the nuptial benediction with an exterior inconsistent with the dictates of modesty, would be insulting the Deity, even in the face of his temple, and profaning a sacrament, which should not be aspired to but in a spirit of religion.

As for the obligations of the married state, they are four; viz. mutual affection, mutual fidelity, mutual assistance, and the common care of their offspring. To the first three of these duties they reciprocally pledge their faith, at the foot of the altar. The last of them is the very design and intention of marriage; namely, to provide the Church with subjects and heaven with Saints. For this purpose, it is incumbent on them to attend to their children's instruction, to make them acquainted with their prayers and the principles of religion; to keep an eye upon their conduct, and to preserve them from danger; and, above all, to lead them, by their own example, in the path of virtue, with unwearied attention.

O God! In its origin, the conjugal union is holy, since thou thyself art the author of it. But how greatly is that sanctity augmented by the grace, which thou hast annexed to it, in making it a sacrament! Thou didst honour with thy presence the nuptials of Cana: thou didst even deign to favour that ceremony with the very first of thy miracles; thereby sanctifying a connexion, which had its beginning with the world. Make all that are called to it, deserving of the grace, which thy mercy designs for them; that they may not think of engaging in it but by the direction of thy spirit and according to the rules of the Church, with virtuous intentions

\* Tob. viii. 5.

and a due previous preparation. Enable them, by thy aid, to fulfil its obligations; that thy love may be the principle and the basis of their union; thy glory the end, and their own salvation the fruit of it.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That it should be remembered that wedlock is a holy state; and that the happiness of the next life, as well as of this, depends on the manner, in which it is engaged in.

## CHAPTER XCIII.

### ON PRAYER.

#### THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

*Be instant in prayer, watching in it in thanksgiving.*  
Coloss. iv. 2.

PRAYER is another resource of religion, and a copious fountain of grace. It is an elevation of the mind and of the heart to God, to lay before him our necessities: it is the feeling of a soul, conscious of its misery, which addresses itself to the author and source of all good, to solicit his commiseration in behalf of its indigence.

Prayer is an indispensable duty, and such as cannot be omitted without the imputation of sin. In regard to the practice of it, the command of Christ is explicit, and frequently repeated. "Watch," he says, "and pray." "Pray always, and faint not." Hence the reproach to his disciples; "Hitherto, you have not asked any thing in my name; ask and you shall receive."\* What he recommended in words, he enforced by example. Whole nights did he spend in prayer: or to speak more correctly, his life was one continued act of this important occupation. Not that he needed to pray for himself: but he would show us what we ought to do, and engage us, by his own practice, to a strict observance of this

\* John xvi. 24.

duty. It was necessary that he should pray for us, to make us sensible of our obligation of praying for ourselves. "Learn," says St. Ambrose, "what is required at your hands; when your Saviour passed entire nights in praying, and in supplicating for you every necessary grace." Salvation is promised only to prayer. Salvation is not attainable but through the medium of prayer. Salvation is granted but to perseverance in prayer.

This holy exercise of prayer is then of absolute necessity: and though it had not been positively enjoined us to pray, and to pray without ceasing, yet the sense of our misery would be sufficient to compel us to it. Cast, my dear Theophilus, a passing glance upon yourself. Do not the hourly succeeding wants of both your body and your soul admonish you to apply continually to him, who alone is able to relieve them? Is it not the part of the distressed to solicit help and assistance? Would the beggar leave off petitioning, while he could thereby get what he wanted? Our poverty is extreme; and the things, we need, are of infinite value. God is ready to grant them; and not only does he permit, but he commands us even to ask for them. Not that our wants are unknown to him; for he is better acquainted with them than we are ourselves; but he will have us expose them to him; in order to make us more desirous of his gracious donations, and to render us, by this desire, still more worthy of receiving them. The desire of the gifts of heaven is enkindled by prayer; and the more ardent this desire, the greater the divine liberality. For God "fills the hungry, and sends the rich away empty," who suppose they want nothing. His intention in so doing is to make us sensible of our dependence, and to keep us truly humble. Was he to bestow his favours on us without waiting to be entreated, we should be inclined, from our natural presumption, to attribute them to ourselves. But when, convinced of our wretchedness, we have recourse to him, we cannot but acknowledge our own insufficiency; and that, whatever he gives us, is the effect of his sole bounty. This humble avowal of our necessitous inability, above all things, moves him to shower his blessings on us.

You here see the wise reasons of the Deity, for exacting us to pray incessantly. Study therefore diligently to fulfil this obligation: and do not imagine that, to discharge a duty so essential, it is sufficient to devote a few hasty moments to

it, and that you are at liberty, for the rest of your time, to lay aside all thoughts of God. So far from this, you must have recourse to prayer frequently, and persevere therein. The Almighty will have us solicit, press, importune him; he is never tired of hearing us: the fund of his grace is inexhaustible; and we cannot please him better than by continually beseeching him to relieve us out of its stores. A potentate of the earth does not allow all ranks of people, indiscriminately, to converse with him: his favourites alone, and that at certain times only, are indulged in this liberty. But the King of heaven permits us to speak with him, whenever we choose, to represent our wants to him, and to supplicate his aid; he even commands us to do, and is displeased if we neglect it. What an honour for a vile creature to be admitted into the presence of his God, to communicate to him his thoughts, his concerns, his desires, and this with the most unreserved freedom, with the best grounded confidence! Would it not be slighting his kindness to omit making use of his gracious condescension?

To whom, O God! shall I apply, under the pressure of my wants, but to thee, the source and origin of every thing desirable? Who, but thou, can ease my sufferings, and sustain me in the day of battle? Encompassed with dangers, convulsed by impetuous passions, I feel sensibly my nothingness and my total inability to extricate, or help myself. But thou enjoimest me to run to thee, to lay before thee my weakness, to invoke thy assistance. I am allowed then, dust and ashes as I am, to speak to thee with assurance, to open my distresses to thee, and to deposite in thy paternal bosom all my troubles and afflictions. Grant me, O Lord! the grace of prayer; fill my breast thyself with those ardent desires, which never fail to ascend to the throne of thy mercy. Yes, my God! when I address myself to thee with the confidence of a child, thy ear is attentive to the voice of my supplication: thou hearest my cries; thou beholdest my tears; thy tender heart melts, and thou repliest interiorly: "Take courage; I will by thy strength; with me thou canst do every thing." Peace and joy follow instantly, and I exclaim with transport: "For ever blessed be thy name, O Lord! for having so closely interwoven my duty and interest."

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should accustom ourselves, by frequent practice, to raise our minds to God.

## CHAPTER XCIV.

## THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

*All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto you. Mark xi. 24.*

ALL things are promised to prayer, when duly performed; an assertion reiterated in almost every page of the Scripture; and, in respect to which, the word of Christ is explicit. "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you."\* Nor is he satisfied with simply telling us that prayer, when accompanied with proper dispositions, is sure to be heard, he even affirms it with an oath: "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it to you."† In fine, to dispel every doubt, he subjoins this proof, which is sufficient to encourage the most disheartened and downcast: "What man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent? If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"‡

After an assurance so positive, so firm, so precise, to doubt of the virtue and efficacy of prayer, one must have bid adieu to faith. If we trust to the promises of a person of credit, with how much greater reason ought we to rely on the asseveration and oath of Jesus Christ? To admit a glimpse of distrust, would be doing him an injury. But whence can arise this diffidence? From our own unworthiness, do you say? But is not the goodness of God towards us entirely gratuitous? And is not this very unworthiness a claim upon a mercy, which the most grievous crimes cannot exhaust, and which invites the greatest sinners to fly to it with confidence? Do we not pray in the name of Christ; and is not our unworthiness screened under the shelter of his infinite merit? No, never was the petition of the humbled sinner

\* Math. vii. 7.

† John xvi. 23.

‡ Math. vii. 9—11.

rejected: It pierces the clouds; it reaches the throne of God, and infallibly draws a look of pity on him, that presents it. "Who," says the Prophet, "ever invoked the name of the Lord, and was despised? Our fathers called upon him, and were liberated: they hoped in him, and were not confounded. Whoever shall invoke the name of the Lord, shall be saved." This firm and unlimited confidence is an act of tribute to the Deity: it is an homage rendered to his power, to his mercy, to his indubitable fidelity: it obtains every thing of God; he refuses nothing to it.

Do you desire an example, Theophilus, of the mighty efficacy, or, to use the expression of one of the fathers, of the omnipotence of prayer? The holy pages afford us many. Moses prays upon the mountain, and the enemies of God's people are routed. Judith prays, and her country is rescued. Ezechiah prays, and the sentence of death, pronounced against him, is revoked. The publican prays in the temple, and he comes away justified. Magdalene prays, and her sins are forgiven her. The thief on the cross prays, and, though stained with the guilt of the most atrocious crimes, he obtains their remission. Hence St. John: "We have confidence towards God, and whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of him."\*

No longer, then, allege your weakness, when exhorted to virtue: no more plead the bent of your evil inclinations, or the impetuosity of your passions. You may pray; and prayer will sustain your weakness: you may pray; and prayer will give you strength against your perverse inclinations: you may pray; and prayer will moderate the violence of your passions. You stand in need of assistance for the regulation of your conduct. Implore the aid of God, and he will grant it: "If any of you want wisdom," St. James says, "let him ask of God, who gives it to all abundantly."† We never fail, then, to obtain of the Almighty what we solicit of him properly; and if we obtain it not, it is always our own fault; it is for want of that firm reliance which at all times succeeds with him.

Never, O God! does a hearty prayer come in vain into thy presence. Thou ever lendest a favourable ear to the cry, that invokes thee; and we are sure of being heard, if we but address thee with confidence. Herein is my trust, my sup-

\* 1 John iii. 21—22.

† James i. 5.



port, my consolation. I am weak, but by praying I may become strong. My enemy is powerful: but, if I pray as I ought, I shall have nothing to fear from him. I am desirous to get the better of a temptation, that molests me: if I supplicate thee fervently, thou wilt either free me from it, or give me the strength to combat it with advantage. That thou wilt come to my help is what I cannot call in question. But what I apprehend is, that I may neglect to apply to thee: however, I hope to be more prudent. Yes, dear Lord! Under all my trials, I will cast myself into the arms of thy compassionate mercy, and in this asylum I shall be secure. Thou wilt cover me with a shield; and thy Almighty hand will blunt the poisoned arrows of my foes.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we may expect every thing from God, if we implore his aid with confidence.

---

CHAPTER XCV.

THE CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

*Cursed be he, that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully.*  
Jerem. xlviii. 10.

THE success of prayer, depends upon the manner in which it is performed. To pray well, we must, in the first place, offer our petitions in the name, and through the merits of Christ. He has promised to grant whatever we may solicit in virtue of his sacred name: "If you shall ask me any thing in my name, that I will do."\* For which reason the Church concludes all her addresses, in this uniform method, "Through our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. Secondly, we must pray with attention: that is, we must think of God, and of what we are asking for. Prayer is an elevation of the mind to God. Wherefore, to be occupied, at that time, with thoughts foreign to the purpose, is not praying. It is true, that invo-

\* John xiv. 14.

luntary distractions do not destroy the effect of prayer: but such, as we give occasion to through our own fault, or do not reject as soon as perceived, are offensive to the Deity. They merit that reproach, which God made formerly to the Jews; "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Beware of drawing the like censure on your head, Theophilus. How can you expect God should attend to you, when you attend not to yourself? Were you speaking to a prince, you would, doubtless, mind what you were saying: with how much more reason ought you to be attentive, when addressing the Almighty! Thirdly, we must pray with confidence. In promising to hear our supplications, Christ always adds this condition, that they be made with faith. "Believe that you shall receive, and it shall come unto you." And his usual reply to those, who came to him for relief, was; "Be it done to thee, according to thy faith." St. James, while he recommends confidence in prayer, decidedly reprobates every degree of hesitation, "He, that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore, let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord."\*

Our reliance, indeed, on God, can never be too great; since it is grounded upon his power, which is infinitely more than adequate to whatever we may have to ask for; upon his mercy, which knows no limits; and upon the merits of Jesus Christ, in whose holy name we pray. What then! In our temporal emergencies, can we apply, without hesitation, to a rich and tried friend, and yet want this firm confidence, when we address ourselves to God, under our spiritual necessities; although he invites, and even commands us to have recourse to him, as to a parent? How injurious such a diffidence! For what is human kindness, comparatively with that of the Deity? Wherefore, let your trust in him be uncircumscribed, and the divine mercy will be so likewise.

Finally, we must pray with perseverance. The Almighty, from motives of infinite wisdom and goodness, sometimes defers granting what we earnestly sue for. But this delay is not a refusal: it is rather a trial of our constancy. He means thereby to make us sensible of the value of his gifts, to inflame our desires, and to fit us to receive them more abundantly, at his own time. We ought never to be dis-

\* James i. 6.

couraged, or tired with praying. So Jesus Christ commands; and to give us a just idea of the necessity of perseverance, he makes use of two comparisons: the first is that of a widow, who by her importunities, succeeds at last in moving the heart of an obdurate judge, and persuades him to do her justice: the second, that of a man, who, in the dead of night, goes to his friend to beg some loaves: the latter refuses to rise; but the former, not disheartened, continues to knock at the door, and redoubles his entreaties: his perseverance is at length rewarded, and he obtains his request. Our Lord concludes this parable, by a strong and pressing exhortation to pray without ceasing, and by a formal promise to grant whatever we ask with perseverance. Taught by these examples, and encouraged by this assurance, you should never despond. The very moment, you desist from praying, may possibly be that, in which your petition would have been granted, had you continued your endeavours. Remember this observation: it is prayer, that asks; but it is perseverance, that obtains.

O Lord! teach me to pray as I ought; for, of myself, I know neither what to ask, nor how. Give me thy holy Spirit to animate and assist me. Be thou the first to speak to my heart, that it may learn how to speak to thee. Give me the spirit of fervour, that my desires may not be languid, and that I may not supplicate those things with indifference, which are inestimable in their value. Penetrate me with a profound awe and respect for thy sacred presence; that I may be occupied with thee alone, and indulge no other thought. I will strive to correct my levity, to avoid all distractions, and to recall my mind placidly, whenever I perceive it to be wandering. Increase, O God! my confidence. Behold thy beloved Son, expiring on the cross. In his name, alone I pray. It is by relying on his merits; it is by trusting to his promises; it is by obeying his command, that I hope to obtain of thy mercy whatever is needful for my salvation. If thou deferrest to favour me, I will not be discouraged. I will continue, I will redouble my solicitations. My importunity will not displease thee. Thou refusest nothing to prayer, when urged with perseverance.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must banish all distractions, as soon as we observe them.

## CHAPTER XCVI.

## ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

## WHAT WE MUST ASK OF GOD.

*Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God.* 1 John iii. 1.

It is from our Saviour himself, we learn what we ought to petition for, and the manner, in which to ask it. He has been pleased himself to draw up the address, that we are to present to his eternal Father; and has dictated a form of prayer, which is hence styled *the Lord's prayer*.

"Jesus Christ," says St. Cyprian, "among other regulations, productive of our happiness, has prescribed a formula of prayer; to the end that we might find a more ready audience from the Father, when we address him in the very words, which his own Son has suggested. Let us therefore pray," adds this holy Doctor, "as our God and Master has taught us. It cannot but be pleasing to the Deity to hear a prayer, which comes immediately from himself; which strikes his ears with the accents of Jesus Christ, and in which the Father acknowledges the words of his Son. Since Christ is our advocate at the throne of mercy, let us use the same language as our powerful intercessor. He assures us, that his Father will grant the petitions, we may offer in his name: how much more will he be disposed to do so, when we present our requests, not only in his name, but in his own terms and expressions!" From these motives, the Church makes a continual use of this sacred prayer. By this she begins and terminates the divine office. She gives it, particularly, a place in the sacrifice of the mass; and recommends it to be daily and frequently used, especially morning and evening, by every description of her children.

The Lord's prayer is composed of a short preface, and seven petitions, the first three of which relate to God, and the four remaining to ourselves. It comprehends whatever we are authorized to ask, or to desire of the Almighty. It is

the rule, by which to form our sentiment and wishes. We are permitted, indeed, to pray in different words; but it is not allowed us to present any other demand, than what is comprised therein. Every sort of request, which has not some connexion with it, is unworthy of a Christian.

The preface consists in these words; *Our Father, who art in heaven*. In this short sentence, Jesus Christ has united whatever is most likely to engage the Deity to hear us, with every motive, that can infuse into us the sentiments of respect, love, and confidence. We call God our Father; and so in fact he is; first, by creation, having given us our life, and made us to his own image; and secondly, still more, by the grace of regeneration; since he has adopted us, by baptism, for his children through Jesus Christ. Because we are his children, St. Paul says, he has replenished us with his Spirit, which cries out: *Father, Father*. O name of sweetness and comfort! What affection, what gratitude, what confidence ought it not to inspire us with! If it be true that God is our Father, can we apprehend our prayers should be rejected, when we remind him of a name which he assumes so endearingly? No. Only let us fear to render ourselves unworthy, by wilful disobedience, of the appellation of his children. Nothing else can obstruct his mercy, or eventually impede the effect of our prayers.

In addressing ourselves to the Deity, we say, each of us individually, *Our Father*, and not *my Father*; because, having all one common father, and all hoping for the same inheritance, we ought to pray not only for ourselves, but likewise for all the faithful, whose brethren we are. A proof that we pray not in our own name, but in the name of Jesus Christ; and in union with the whole body of the Church, of which we are members. We add, *Who art in heaven*: for though God be every where, yet we particularly regard the heavens as the seat of his glory. It is there he displays his magnificence, and shows himself face to face. It is thither we are called, as to our only true country, and the blissful inheritance, designed for us by our Father. In the time of prayer, therefore, let us raise up our minds to heaven; let us join with its blessed inhabitants, and excite within our breast the consolatory hope of possessing God eternally.

Thou permittest me, O God! thou even commandest me to call thee *Father*. This name, so dear to my heart, is a pledge of thy affection, and assures me of thy mercy. Thou

art my Father, and the best of Fathers. What canst thou refuse me, that may conduce to my welfare. I ask nothing of thee, O Father, but what thou thyself hast taught me to pray for. The prayer which I use, is worded by thee: thou wilt hear it, therefore, with complacency, and grant me its requests. Nothing more do I desire; for all my real wants are included in it. How happy to know that I have in heaven a Father, infinitely rich, and infinitely kind; who is willing to remedy all my evils, and to enrich me with every thing good! O my Father, my affectionate Father! I present myself before thee with the confidence of thy child: and pour out my soul into thy tender, paternal bosom. How good art thou to consider me, to treat me as thy child! What am I, dear Lord! to be so highly honoured, so advantageously provided for? I am thy child: what then can be wanting to me? On this title, I may ask for every thing, and shall be sure of obtaining it.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should speak to the Almighty as to a loving, affectionate Parent.

---

CHAPTER XCVII.

THE FIRST PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

*Hallowed be thy name.*

It is certainly just that the first object of our wishes should be the glory of God. If we are his children, nothing ought to be dearer to us than the honour of our Father. Wherefore, we begin by requesting that his name be hallowed; that is to say, revered and glorified.

The name of God is holy of itself; nor is it possible to add to it any new degree of sanctity. But it is frequently dishonoured, as well by the behaviour, as by the conversation of mankind. What we beg by this petition is that the sacred name of the Deity may be known, praised and adored by all

creatures; that every tongue may bless him; that the whole universe may pay him the homage, which is due to his Sovereign Majesty, and that his glory may be spread through all the regions of the globe. There are still nations, that are infidel, nations that are ignorant of God. We entreat him to open their eyes to his admirable light, and to discover himself to them. There are those, who, although they know him, do not render him a pure worship: a prey to error and to the delusions of deceitful, presumptuous reason, they refuse to stoop to the yoke of faith and to the authority, which he has established. We beg him to show them the truth, to remove their prejudices, and happily to restore them to the bosom of his Church. Finally, there are bad Christians, who, so far from serving God, insult him by their crimes, and blaspheme his mighty name. We beseech him to grant them the grace of a sincere conversion, and to enable them, in future, to glorify him by their conduct. We pray even for the just, who already honour God by the edification of their lives; that they may increase in virtue, and persevere in righteousness. But what, above all things, we should desire is to sanctify the name of God ourselves, to devote our whole being to it's glory, and to extend the adoration of it as widely as possible.

We sanctify the name of God in thought, when we humble ourselves sincerely in the presence of his Supreme Majesty, and never think of what relates to him, but with reverence and awe. We sanctify his holy name in word, when we speak of him only with the feelings of internal adoration. We sanctify this sacred name in deed, when our lives are so exemplary, as to lead others to respect it, and to render him the tribute of their service and obedience.

Whenever, therefore, Theophilus, you repeat this petition, *Hallowed be thy name*, you should have a sincere desire to promote, as far as in your power, the glory of God; to induce others to honour him; and to impress them with the love of virtue, both by your words and by your example. Without this desire, your insincere heart would give the lie to your tongue, and your own mouth would convict you; because you would not wish cordially what you made a show of requesting. What could you think of yourself, were you of the number of those, who, while they petitioned God to glorify his name, led others to offend him? With what face can such wretches, the agents of Satan, dare to beg of the Almighty that his holy name be honoured; while they are

labouring to seduce the innocent, to stifle in them the sentiments of the fear of God and religion; while, not satisfied with being vicious themselves, they endeavour to corrupt others, to shake the roots of their faith, to dishearten them by ridicule; while they cast that opprobrium on virtue, which is due only to vice, as if it were disgraceful in a child to show respect to his Father? To recite this divine prayer with such dispositions as these, would it not be outraging the Deity, instead of honouring his name? Would it not be pronouncing with our own lips the sentence of our condemnation? Yes: wo to such scandalous sinners, unless, before they say this prayer, they renounce their impiety, and be firmly determined, by a change of life, to contribute their part to the propagation of the divine honour; according to that of Jesus Christ; "Let your light shine before men: that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven."\*

Give me, O God! those ardent longings, which thou gavest formerly to thy prophet, when in the fervour of zeal, he exclaimed; "Sing joyfully to God, all the earth: serve ye the Lord with gladness. Come in before his presence with exceeding great joy. Know ye that the Lord he is God: he made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Go ye into his gates with praise, into his courts with hymns, and give glory to him. Praise ye his name; for the Lord is sweet, his mercy endureth for ever, and his truth to generation and generation."† But what I chiefly should desire is to sanctify thy holy name myself. What I should ask of thee is that I may honour thee in my state of life, as far as depends upon me: that I may not confine myself to mere words, but, by the purity of my morals, by the fervour of my devotion, and by the regularity of my conduct, may offer to thee daily a sacrifice of praise, and may render thee, till death, an incessant homage of adoration.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That the glory of God should be the end of all we do.

\* Math. v, 16.

† Psal. xcix.



## CHAPTER XCVIII.

## THE SECOND PETITION.

*Thy kingdom come.*

By these words, we do not beg that God may possess a sovereign power over the whole extent of created nature. This sovereignty belongs to him, as his essential right; nor can any thing withdraw itself from the rule of his dominion. It is of this universal empire the Psalmist speaks, when he says; "Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages; and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations."\* But there is another sort of kingdom; a kingdom of grace, to the extension of which we are called upon to co-operate: a kingdom wholly spiritual, in which the soul, aided by the divine assistance, obeys freely and willingly all the inspirations of heaven, acquiesces in the will of God without reserve, executes all his orders with promptness and fidelity, and owns no rule of conduct but his law and commandments: a kingdom, in which the heart yields itself captive to the Almighty, in order that he may take full possession of it, and govern it, as he pleases. Such is the kingdom, we pray that God would establish within us at present. There is also a kingdom of glory, where the Deity has prepared immortal crowns for his elect; where he gives himself to them for their eternal reward; where he lavishes all his treasures on them; where he fills them with the abundance of the good things of his house, and inebriates them with the torrent of his ineffable delights; where, in fine, he makes them reign with him for ages everlasting. Such is the kingdom, to whose coming we look forward. What therefore we solicit is, that God may reign in our hearts, by his grace, at present; and may make us reign eternally, in his glory, hereafter.

When you recite this petition, Theophilus, you ought sincerely to wish that the reign of sin and concupiscence be annihilated within you; that your mind and your body be subjected to the Deity, and that he become the supreme master of whatever belongs to you. If you are enslaved to bad habits, and to the tyranny of vice, you should bewail

\* Psalms cxliv. 13.

your unhappy servitude, and long to be restored to the liberty of God's children. After which, you should raise your looks above this sublunary earth, which is but the place of your exile; and aspire to your celestial country, where, absorbed in delights, you may reign with Christ for ever. This pleasing desire should be the object of all your wishes, the companion of all your labours. The life of man, short as it is, is filled with many miseries. How can we be so fond of it, when we know that we are designed for a life of eternal bliss? How dread the separation from this perishable body, which prevents us from seeing God, and being united to his Saints. While we inhabit these frames of clay, we are kept at a distance from the Lord. "For we know if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven."\* What then can be more desirable, than to be delivered from this prison, to quit this visible world, in which we are exposed to many dangers, and in which we every instant, run the risk of being ruined, for eternity? A true Christian has continually before his eyes the immense recompense, he expects. He considers himself as a mere traveller, during his abode in the flesh. He is already a citizen of heaven, by the vigour of his faith and by the firmness of his hope. On the banks of the streams of Babylon, his eyes flow with tears at the recollection of the blessed Jerusalem, his only true country. He often lifts his eyes to the summit of the holy mountain, the residence of peace, his looked for inheritance; where his Saviour shall crown him with the wreaths of immortality.

I lament, O my God! to see myself in danger of offending thee continually. When shall I be emancipated from this wretched servitude of sin? When shall I be delivered from the tyranny of my passions? When wilt thou reign perfectly in my heart and its affections? Unhappy me! When shall I be liberated from this body of death? Break, O Lord! the bonds, that attach me to the earth. May that blessed kingdom come, where I shall behold thee unveiled; where I shall love thee unrivalled; where I shall possess thee undisturbed. I long to leave this world and to be with thee: nevertheless, I do not presume to ask for death, because I apprehend I may be unfit for it. Prepare me by thy grace, and give me the disposition of those virtuous souls, who bear life with patience, and meet death with alacrity. Alas, my God! do I

\* 2 Cor. v. 1.

not delude and deceive myself? In spite of the view, which faith gives me of heaven, I feel the pressure of human misery which keeps me grovelling upon earth. But they are the sentiments of corrupt nature, which I disclaim and renounce. Whether she be willing or not, all my desires shall tend to heaven. *May thy kingdom come.* May my soul, disengaged from the ties of this earthly prison, take its flight, ere it be long, to the regions of the living. How greatly should I be my own enemy, if, for the sake of a transitory life, a life pregnant with wretchedness, I could wish to prolong my banishment, and to retard the enjoyment of my supreme felicity!

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should incessantly aspire after the kingdom of heaven.

---

## CHAPTER XCIX.

### THE THIRD PETITION.

*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*

To obtain of our Father the inheritance he reserves for us and the kingdom, to which he destines us, we must accomplish his will. This our Redeemer inculcates in that memorable sentence. "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven."\* For which reason, he enjoins us to say; *Thy will be done*; inasmuch as we are bound to show ourselves ready to execute all his orders.

There is a will in God, which is the standard of all our obligations; by which he commands what is right, and forbids what is wrong. This is the will the Psalmist meant, when he said; "Teach me to do thy will; make me walk in the way of thy precepts." This divine will is disclosed to us

\* Math. vii. 21,

in the commandments of God, in the precepts of the Church, and in the injunctions of Superiors. Wherefore, in repeating those words; "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," we beg of God the grace to observe his law, to obey his Church, and to submit to all them, that he has appointed to conduct us: we pray that this obedience may be as perfect and complete, as that of the Angels and Saints, in the regions of bliss. There, all obey the Deity with promptitude, with fidelity, and with ardour. And do you, my dear Theophilus, obey him in like manner? Are you punctual in fulfilling his orders, and those of such, as hold his place? Yet, we cannot be serious in reciting this petition, unless our heart and tongue accord. It would be lying to the Almighty to ask of him, with our lips, what our heart did not wish.

There is a will in God, which is the cause of all the events and occurrences of life; which ordains and directs whatever happens in the world. It is not in our power either to accelerate or to retard them. Our duty, in respect to this divine will, is to adore and to submit to it; to receive, with resignation, all the evils, it is pleased to send us; and to accept, as from the hand of a parent, the corrections it inflicts. God permits such things to befall us, to bring about the designs, which his mercy has upon us. If he visits us with afflictions, it is because he has a mind to save us. He desires they should serve for the expiation of our sins. It is, therefore, an effect of his kindness, rather than of his justice, that he punishes us in this life: for which reason the Apostle says, that the Lord chastises those, he loves; proving by this very act that he considers them as his children: for where, he adds, is the child, who is not corrected by his father?

Wherefore, what we beg by those words; *Thy will be done*; is that we may bear with an entire submission all the sufferings, he may allot for us; that, whatever happens, he may, at all times, find us patient, resigned and perfectly conformed to the views of his providence. To say this prayer, then, with the dispositions it demands, we should be cordially determined to renounce our own will. And, in fact, nothing so advantageous to us, as to subject this stubborn will of ours, to the will of the Supreme Being. The sole cause of man's fall, was that he preferred his own will to that of the Deity; and he can now be saved only by an opposite conduct. "Take away self-will," says St. Bernard, "and hell will exist no longer." Of this perfect acquiescence in

the holy will of God, our Saviour thus explains both his sentiments and practice: "I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me."\* "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me."† In fact, his whole life was a faithful performance of the orders of his Father. If he is born in a stable; if he spends his youth in a low, humiliating obscurity, and the latter part of his time, in the laborious functions of an ungrateful ministry; it is in compliance with these orders, by which he regulates every step; in fine, if the thread of his life is cut off by the most ignominious of punishments, it is because the will of his Father must be accomplished, and not his own.

I cannot, my God! be saved but by doing thy will, by keeping thy commands. Thy law is holy, and my happiness depends on observing it punctually. I submit to it from my heart, and here earnestly resolve to be at all times ruled by it. Thou requirest me to be docile to the instructions of my superiors: wherefore, I will entertain for them that deference, which is due to their office. I renounce that repugnance, which I feel to be commanded. I will combat the pride, that inclines me to resist them. If they find fault with and chide me, I will take it with submission; and will have no other concern, than that of having merited their displeasure. Thou desirest me to be exact in the discharge of all the duties, belonging to my state. I will endeavour so to be, and to turn every moment to the most solid advantage. I will give to prayer all the time, that is dedicated to it, and the like to my work; while to please and serve thee, shall be my object in all things. But dear Lord, alas! what will become of my resolutions, if thou dost not aid me by thy grace! This grace, therefore, I now beg of thee, in the name of my Redeemer, who came into the world, but to execute thy will, and "who was obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross."

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we must do every thing with a view to accomplish the will of God.

\* John v. 30.

† John iv. 34.

## CHAPTER C.

## THE FOURTH PETITION.

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

AFTER the three former petitions, which relate to the Deity, we ask of our heavenly Father whatever is necessary for our souls or bodies. The Almighty is the fountain of every thing good; and provides for all our wants in the order of nature, as well as in that of grace. We are all in his eyes, like indigent beggars, who have nothing but what we receive from his bounteous liberality. "All," says the Psalmist, "expect of thee, that thou give them food in season, when thou openest thy hand, they shall all be filled with good."\* The rich themselves, are obliged to sue to him for their daily bread; that they may not forget, that whatever they possess, it is the gift of God, and that without his protection, they may many ways be deprived of it.

Take notice, Theophilus, that we petition the Almighty, not for superfluous riches, not for what may gratify sensuality, or our insatiable pride; but solely for our bread; that is to say, for our support and maintenance, according to our station. And this even we ask but for the present day: for our Saviour forbids us to be concerned about to-morrow, which we are not sure of arriving at. He will have us trust to his providence, and every day have recourse to him; in a full assurance that we shall every day find in him a tender parent; always equally disposed to befriend and assist us. "Be not solicitous, therefore, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? Your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things."† Nevertheless, this reliance on Providence must not be such as to make us indolent, or slothfully presumptuous. God does not mean to countenance idleness: but he orders us to do what we can; and when we have performed our part, to confide in him, and in the inexhaustible treasures of his beneficent providence. The Isrealites in the desert received a daily supply of manna; and for forty successive

\* Ps. ciii. 27, 28.

† Mark. vi. 31.

years it never once failed them. So far for the wants and exigencies of the body.

But we have a soul likewise, which demands its proper sustenance and nutriment : and it is this spiritual bread, that we principally solicit by this heaven-taught prayer. The food of the soul is the Word of God ; it is Grace ; it is the Eucharist. The word of God supports the soul. It sustains the just, and advances them in righteousness : it reclaims the sinner, and restores him to life. It is the ordinary manner, in which God confers and increases the knowledge of himself and the love of his service. So far, therefore, for neglecting it, my child, you should attend to it with reverence, and with an earnest desire of improving by its lessons. Grace is as necessary for the soul, as bread is for the body : it is its strength, its energy, its life : and as our want of it is daily, so God would have us daily renew our petitions to procure it. Finally, the holy Eucharist is the nourishment of the soul, as Christ himself affirms. "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you." "I am the living bread, that came down from heaven." "He that eateth of this bread, shall live for ever."\* The primitive Christians, as I have elsewhere told you, partook every day of this celestial food ; and it would be highly to our advantage could we imitate their example, at least at a distance: for, without this sustenance, the soul languishes and dies. But this is a matter of great delicacy ; and how often we should communicate must be left to the decision of our spiritual director. We should, however, strive so to live, as to be always in readiness : and as the principal requisite is purity of heart, in begging God to grant us *our daily bread*, we beseech him to give us that internal cleanness, which may fit us to receive him.

May I presume to say, O God ! Since thou art *our Father*, this character obliges thee to provide for thy children. I come to thee, therefore, as to the source of all good. In representing my corporal wants, I ask not for superfluities, which would only be prejudicial, by my abuse or misapplication of them. I beg solely what is necessary to live in a manner becoming my state. It is not with an anxious look to futurity that I make this request : it is only for to-day : to-morrow I

\* John vi.

will repeat it. It is just I should daily confess to thee my indigence. It is just I should daily do homage to thy power. But what I chiefly beg of thee, O Lord! is to relieve the necessities of my soul, by communicating to me thy word, thy grace, the divine sacrament of thy body and blood. This heavenly food is, alas! infinitely more essential to me, than my corporal sustenance. The life of the soul is incomparably more valuable, than that of the body. Enlighten me, then, with thy holy doctrine. Make me relish it, meditate on it, and feed myself with it continually. Infuse into my heart the abundance of thy grace, to be my strength and support under the extremity of my weakness. Admit me often to thy table: make me run to it with avidity, and place all my delight in that bread of Angels, which imparts eternal life.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should expect every thing from Providence, after using our own endeavours.

---

CHAPTER CI.

THE FIFTH PETITION.

*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them, that trespass against us.*

A God so benevolent, a Father so kind, should ever experience in his children a complete docility, an inviolable attachment to his orders and injunctions. But the sentiments of mankind and their conduct, in regard to the Deity, are very different from this. They offend him daily: nay, the generality infringe his precepts, in points the most essential, and outrageously insult him by the most grievous crimes. The just themselves fall often into faults, that are repugnant to his sanctity. They are not guilty, it is true, of such sins, as wound the soul mortally, and separate it from God; but they every day do things, that excite his displeasure. "If



we say that we have no sin ; we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”\*—“ In many things we all offend.”†

From the knowledge of this, our weakness, and of the depravity of our nature, Christ has made it a part of our duty to sue to him every day for the forgiveness of our transgressions. He has inserted this petition in the prayer which he has taught us, from no other motive, than because he wishes to pardon us. Had he not been so disposed, he would not have laid this injunction on us. But, if we expect to profit by it, it is requisite that we begin at least to be sorry for our faults : for it is a maxim in divinity that, without contrition, no sin can be remitted, whether mortal or venial. God forgives only those, who are concerned for having offended him, and who are determined to displease him no more for the future. Yet we are not to desist from praying, because we seem to want this due tone of mind. On the contrary, we should pray, in order to acquire it. When we say ; *Forgive us our trespasses* ; we beg of God the grace of a sincere repentance, that thus we may obtain the remission of our sins. In this disposition, we are sure of being heard, and of procuring a reconciliation with offended Heaven. Yes, my dear Theophilus, whatever faults you may have committed, however enormous or multiplied, they will certainly be forgiven, if you are but truly sorry for them. For this you have God's promise ; to which he adds this sole condition, that you yourself pardon them, that may have trespassed against you.

In fact, is it just to desire that the Almighty should forgive us, if we ourselves do not forgive the faults of our neighbour? Is it reasonable to expect that God should show us indulgence, and forget the offences, we commit against him, if we are bent on resenting the injuries, received from our brethren? The words of this petition are ; “ Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” Wherefore, the forgiveness we grant to others, is the measure of that, which we ask for ourselves. If we pardon our neighbour, God will also pardon us : if we refuse to forgive him, God will refuse to forgive us. To recite this prayer, and to harbour at the same time any resentment against such, as have treated us wrongfully, would be saying plainly to the Deity ; forgive me not, since I will not forgive them, that have injured me ; revenge thyself on me, for I will be revenged on them.

\* 1 John i. 8.

† James iii. 2.

It would be pronouncing our own condemnation; in asking for ourselves a similar malediction, as we imprecate on others. God forbid you be ever actuated by so criminal a spirit. Consider it rather as a matter, which should give you infinite comfort, that your reconciliation with God is annexed to a condition, dependent wholly on yourself. Accede to this condition readily. Pardon your brethren freely, without limitation or reserve; that your heavenly Father may pardon you, according to the promise of Jesus Christ.

O my God! I cheerfully accept the condition, on which thou art pleased to grant me forgiveness. It is too much to my interest not to be gladly complied with. Thou hast said; "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven."\* Yes, dear Lord, if I have been injured, by whomsoever it may have been, I now desire to pardon it, I pardon it fully. I pardon it not only in word and in outward appearance; but sincerely and from my heart. Such is, I hope, at present, my real disposition. Far from me, be all resentment, all desires of revenge. If, in spite of me, there still lurk in my heart any remnants of anger, I disown them; I will resist them; I will strive to stifle their emotions, and to efface the slightest vestige of them. On these terms, thou permittest me to say to thee; forgive, because I forgive, and pardon me in a like manner. Thou wilt listen to thy mercy, because I listen to my duty. I perform what thou hast commanded; and I dare answer, with an humble confidence, that thou wilt do what thou hast promised. If I be but kindly charitable and indulgent to my brethren, I shall find in thee a Father full of clemency and goodness.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should pardon every thing sincerely, and never admit a thought of revenge.

\* Luke vi. 37.

## CHAPTER CII.

## THE SIXTH PETITION.

*And lead us not into temptation.*

It suffices not for our present state that the mercy of God should forgive us the sins, we have already committed. We, moreover, need his grace to preserve us from adding to them. To this we are constantly exposed from the forcible temptations, that assail us on every quarter. For this reason, we implore the divine protection, and say to the Almighty: "Lead us not into temptation;" thereby beseeching him to compassionate our weakness, and either to save and defend us from temptations, or to enable us to overcome them.

The world, the devil, and the flesh act in concert for our destruction. The world tempts us by its maxims, by its language, by its practice. "The creatures of God," says the Wise man, "are turned to an abomination, and a temptation to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise."\* The devil tempts us, by deluding our senses, and by impressing our fancy with images, productive of bad thoughts. He is continually in motion, seeking to devour us: every engine does he put in play to effectuate our ruin. Finally, the flesh tempts us; that is to say, that concupiscence and vicious propensity, which we bring with us into life. This our natural corruption pursues us every where: it is within us, as a domestic enemy, and supplies the other two with arms, to attack us with greater advantage. "Every man," St. James says, "is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured."†

To be tempted is not a sin, Theophilus: on the contrary, it is often an occasion of merit, by the resistance made to it. But it is always a sin to consent to temptation. If, through the apprehension of displeasing God, we suppress it from the beginning, and refuse constantly to hearken to it, no blame can apply to us: our opposition is an act of virtue, which

\* Wisdom xiv. 11.

† James i. 14.

the Deity will reward. But if we give admittance to the temptation, of whatever kind it be, if we entertain it with complacency, when once conscious of it, we then become culpable.

Although temptation of itself be not sinful, yet it is always dangerous. Nevertheless, we ask not of God to be wholly exempted from temptations; for they are inevitable in this life, which is a state of warfare and incessant hostilities. The greatest Saints were tempted: the Son of God himself was tempted; that he might show us how to conquer, and merit for us the like grace. What we solicit is not to be abandoned in the hour of temptation. So extreme is our weakness that the slightest trial is sufficient to subdue and overset us. The grace of God is our sole resource: and we therefore run into his arms, humbly confessing our misery. We entreat him to preserve us from all the temptations, that might probably overpower us; and as to those, he is pleased to send for the trial of our virtue, to support our infirmity and to give us the victory over them. With the assistance of the Almighty we can have nothing to fear. His power is competent to afford us success, and even to make our temptations redound to our welfare. This he will surely do, if we be careful not to expose ourselves, and if we implore his gracious aid under the temptations that are unavoidable. We shall not then fight singly: God will combat with us, and our triumph will be unquestionable. "God is faithful," says St. Paul, "and will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make temptation also with issue, that you may be able to resist."\* He cannot be wanting to his word: and this he has pledged to succour those, that place their reliance on him, and to protect all such, as invoke his holy name. They will, doubtless, be attacked: but nothing can hurt them, while God is their asylum. The temptation will only serve to perfect their virtue, and to merit his grace to persevere unto the end.

I cannot help being tempted, O God! and such is my weakness that I justly ought to dread the very appearance of danger. Didst thou not sustain me by thy hand, I should fall at every step. This is the aid I request of thee, when I repeat, as thou hast ordered; "Lead me not into temptation." What am I of myself, but a vessel of frailty, in constant dan-

\* Cor. x. 13.

ger of being broken? What else can I do, but, with uplifted eyes, address myself to thee? God of my soul, which thou hast redeemed! Support me under the perils, to which thou seest me unequal. Bestow, in such circumstances, thy watchful attention on me, and redouble thy care to defend and protect me. Remember the high price, thou hast paid for my soul; and permit not the world, the devil, or the flesh to deprive thee of what thou hast purchased with thy blood. No, dear Lord! I will never throw myself wilfully into the way of temptation. Could I do so, I should be highly undeserving of thy needful assistance. And for the temptations, that I cannot avoid, I will call upon thee, and await thy aid confidently. With the help of thy grace, I am assured of being safe.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should shun temptations, when we can; and, when we cannot, should address ourselves to Heaven.

---

## CHAPTER CIII.

### THE SEVENTH PETITION.

*But deliver us from evil. Amen.*

THIS divine prayer concludes by begging of the Almighty to deliver us from evil; that is, my Theophilus, from the miseries of life, from the enemies of our salvation, and from eternal perdition.

To how many miseries are we not liable in this our terrestrial existence! With what wretchedness is it not replete! Illness and pain assail the body; grief and anxiety haunt the soul. Justly does the Church denominate this earth, on which we live, a valley of tears. We pray not to be entirely freed from the pressure of these evils: that cannot be; for they are inseparable from our condition. But we pray to be delivered from such of them, as might be the occasions of our sinning, and obstruct our salvation. There is no other real evil, but those that militate against our spiritual welfare. If

sickness, poverty or misfortune deserve the name of evils, it is chiefly because they disquiet the soul, and expose it to the attacks of impatience, fretfulness and despair; and because we have not sufficient virtue to bear them without sin. But the evils, that are endured patiently, so far from being hurtful, contribute to purify us, and to promote our sanctification. However disagreeable and afflictive, they are rather objects to be desired, than unreasonably feared. For, in the order of Providence, they are the punishments of sin, and the means to attain interminable bliss. "We must pass," St. Paul tells us, "through many tribulations, to obtain a seat in heaven." However, we are allowed to solicit a deliverance from them, provided we prefer our prayer with an entire resignation to the will of God, and be disposed to receive them humbly, if he judges them necessary, or serviceable to our salvation. If we pray in this manner, and persevere in our prayer, we shall undoubtedly find the true remedy of our miseries. God will hear our petitions, and redress our grievances; either by removing them from us, or by, what is far more advantageous, empowering us to bear them.

Secondly, we beg to be delivered from the enemies of our salvation, and particularly from the devil, our most cruel opponent. This spirit of darkness, not content with seducing our protoparents in paradise, and with involving their posterity in evils without end, ceases not to infest us, and to spread wide his snares, to beguile and entrap us. But the Almighty checks his rage, and prescribes him such limits, as he is unable to pass. "Our enemy," says St. Cyprian, "can do us no harm without the permission of God. To the Deity, therefore, we must look for help, and address our supplications."

Finally, we solicit God to deliver us from eternal damnation; the sovereign evil, the irreparable evil, the evil, which is the complement and fulness of all other evils. In this horrid abyss, in this fatal eternity, it will no longer avail us to beg to be delivered from it: we must for ever bear the weight of the divine indignation. There, no redemption must be hoped for, no happiness expected, no salvation thought of; but a collection of all possible evils endured, and endured throughout eternity. With what ardour, with what perseverance should we not entreat to be secured from an evil so tremendous! Can we ever be tired of repeating this petition, while a hope remains of our being able to obtain it?

Thou permittest me, O God! to request thee to deliver me from the temporal evils; from sickness, from pain and from the numberless vexations of this probatory state. But it is thy desire that, in making this petition, I be cordially resigned to the dispensations of thy providence. Wherefore, whenever I recite it, I would be always understood to include this submission. I have deserved to suffer; and I offer to thee all such trials in satisfaction for my sins. Give me, O Lord! the virtue of patience, which I stand so much in need of. Have regard to my weakness, O Father of mercies! O God of all consolation! and impart to me that sacred unction, which assuages the pangs of wretchedness. But, besides the evils of the body, there are others far more alarming; those of the soul, which are eternal. From these, above all, O God! deliver me. Deliver me from the evil spirit; from the spirit of pride and indocility, from the spirit of lying and detraction, from the spirit of impurity and sloth, which would drag me into hell. Alas, dear Lord! if, to avoid this last-mentioned evil, it be necessary I should suffer any other whatsoever, I no longer entreat thee to spare me in this world. Strike; I give myself up to thee without reserve or restriction. I am in the hands of a parent, who is acquainted with all that regards me. This consideration is sufficient to secure my tranquillity be my afflictions what they may.

### *The Practical Inference.*

That we should confidently apply to God under all our distresses.

---

## CHAPTER CIV.

### ON THE ANGELICAL SALUTATION.

IN the next place after God, the first object of our veneration is the blessed Virgin, his holy Mother. She was selected, antecedently to time, to be the living temple of the Eternal Wisdom, and the happy instrument of man's salvation. By

Her august character of Mother of God, she is elevated, in glory, above the Angels and Saints, of whom she is the Queen.

The homage, therefore, which we pay to her, is peculiar to herself, and different from that, which we render to the other Saints. Replenished, from her conception, with the most excellent gifts of heaven, she was an accomplished model of every virtue, and the purest of God's creatures. By a particular privilege, she was exempt from all sin. Compassionate and kind, she has the affection of a mother for us. And, in fact, we are become her children, from the time that Jesus Christ, expiring on the cross, recommended her to St. John, and, in him, to all Christians, in the quality of a parent. She feels for our distresses. Her tender heart melts at the sight of our necessities, when we expose them with confidence. "Never," says St. Bernard, "did any one invoke her, without finding the effects of her benevolent protection."

She interests herself especially in favour of young people, whose weakness she is acquainted with. She knows the dangers that surround them; the attempts the devil makes upon them; the snares he lays to catch them, and his efforts to seduce and to deprive them of their innocence. She protects them with peculiar tenderness, when they seek shelter under her wings. Many instances might be produced of those, whom she has happily preserved from the perils of that age. The lives of the Saints afford proofs without end of the virtue of her intercession, in behalf of endangered and persecuted youth.

You will conceive how efficacious her intercession must be at the throne of grace, if you reflect that she has with her Son, the influence of a beloved Mother. Her power with Jesus Christ, is proportioned to his affection for her. Her Son, who is omnipotent, can refuse nothing to the best, the most tender of parents. He shares, as we may say, his authority with her. Through her hands, he dispenses his favours to mankind, and requires them to make application to her for the redress of their miseries.

Wherefore, Theophilus, you should have recourse to the blessed Virgin with the confidence of a child. Cherish a tender devotion towards her, and you will assuredly reap the fruit of your piety. In the time of temptation, implore her benevolence. If dejection oppresses, or passion torments



you, think of her. In whatever emergencies, cast yourself into her arms; there you will find comfort, animation and strength. Are you virtuous and good? Through her means, you will acquire an augmentation of righteousness. Are you so unfortunate as to have fallen into the abyss of sin? Run to her, "the mother of mercies, the refuge of sinners." She will reconcile you with her Son. Whatever be your state of life, reflect upon the virtues, that shone so brightly in her; more especially her purity, and her wonderful humility; and endeavour to copy them, to the best of your power. By living in this manner, you will be truly her child; and never will you perish, while under her tutelage.

The best prayer you can address to her, is that, of which the Church makes so frequent use; and which she commonly unites with the one taught us by Christ. This prayer, so sublime in its simplicity, recalls to our remembrance the grand mystery of the incarnation. It includes, in a few words, the most perfect eulogy of this illustrious Virgin; and is calculated to impress us with an unreserved trust in her influence and kindness. It is styled *The Angelical Salutation*; because it begins with the words, with which Gabriel saluted her, on opening to her his mission. *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women.* The last mentioned words were soon after repeated by the pious Elizabeth, on the visit she received from the Mother of God; to which she added the following; *And blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* In addition to these the Church has subjoined; *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.* Wherefore, when you say this prayer, your intentions should be to return thanks to the Deity, for the mystery of the incarnation, to honour the blessed Virgin, who had so great a share in it, and to express to her the confidence, which you repose in her care.

*Hail, then, O sacred Virgin! Thou hast borne in thy chaste womb, the very Author of grace, and received from his plenitude a superabundance thereof, that has contributed to make thee the most perfect of creatures. The Lord is with thee,* by the most intimate union; for of thee and of thy substance, did he form for himself a body. Thou wert filled with all blessings, and the applause of earth and heaven unite in extolling thee. *The fruit of thy womb* is the source of that benediction, which has spread through all nations, and glad-

dened the universe. *Holy Mary, Mother of God*, thou beholdest our miseries, and art sensible of our wants. *Pray for us now*:—we are sinners: obtain our repentance and the pardon of our sins. Pray for us *at the hour of our death*. Lend us thy assistance at that critical moment, and support us, by thy presence, under the agonies of dissolution. Present us, in person, to the throne of thy Son, who will then become our judge; and procure us, through his merits, a favourable sentence.

*The Practical Inference.*

That we should say the *Hail Mary* with attention and piety.

THE END.











6254/

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



C008495019



